Pinnacle Papers
VOLUME 3

مَنْهَجٌ تَرْبَوِيٌّ فَرِيدٌ فِي القُرْآن

A Unique Pedagogical Approach in the Qur'ān

By
Imam Muhammad Sa'īd Ramadān al-Būtī

Translated by
Mahdi Lock

NAWA BOOKS

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Pinnacle Papers:

Volume III

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We at Nawabooks would like to express our appreciation to everybody who contributed in making this book a reality. We pray that Allah ﷻ bestow His blessings upon it by guiding readers of this book closer towards Allah ﷻ and His beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Pinnacle Papers: A Collection of Masterpieces by Imam Muhammad Sa'id Ramadān al-Būṭī

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A Unique Pedagogical Approach in the Qur'ān

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Imam Muḥammad Sa'īd Ramaḍan Al-Būṭī is one of the foremost Muslim theologians and legal scholars of this age. Born in 1929 in the village of Ayn Dewar in northern Syria, the imam moved to Damascus at the age of four with his father, the great scholar Mullā Ramaḍān al-Būṭī ﷺ, where he received his primary and secondary education. In 1953, he joined the Faculty of Sharī'ah at the University of al-Azhar in Cairo, Egypt, graduating with a first class in 1955. The following year he obtained a Diploma in Education from the Faculty of Arabic Language at the same University.

In 1958, the Imam was appointed as a teacher at the secondary school in Homs and in 1961, he was appointed as a lecturer in the Faculty of Sharī'ah at the University of Damascus. In 1965, at the University of al-Azhar once again, he obtained his doctorate with high distinction and a recommendation for a teaching post. That same year, he was appointed as a teacher in the Faculty of Sharī'ah at the University of Damascus, then an assistant professor and finally a full professor. He became the vice dean of that college in 1975 and then the dean in 1977. A few years later, he was appointed head of the department of Theology and Comparative Religion.

In addition to his lecturing, Imam al-Būṭī wrote around sixty books covering various Islamic sciences and subjects, the most prominent ones being Fiqh al-Sīrah (The Jurisprudence of the Prophetic Biography), *Kubrā al-Yaqīniyyāt al-Kawniyyah* (The Greatest Universal Sureties) and his four-volume commentary on the spiritual aphorisms of Imam Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh al-Askandarī. He was also very active in teaching common believers in local masjids, especially Masjid al-Īmān in Damascus, and on television, recordings of which can be found online and especially on the site www.naseemalsham.com. He also served as the imam at the Umayyad Grand Masjid in Damascus for Friday prayers, a post he held for decades.

On March 21, 2013, Imam al-Būtī, along with approximately fifty students, was murdered by terrorists while teaching Qur'ānic commentary in Masjid al-Īmān. Despite the immense trials and tribulations that Syria was and is still enduring, Imam al-Būṭī ﷺ was never dissuaded from his dedicated service to knowledge. After a funeral prayer that was attended by thousands of people, the Imam was buried next to Imam Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī ﷺ in Bāb al-Saghīr graveyard in Damascus. May the Lord ﷻ bless and have mercy on him and all of us.

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all creation, who forgives sins and with Him alone is every success. There is no power or strength except in Him. As Allah has honoured this miserable slave with the completion of such a task, all I ask is that He increase the blessings He has already bestowed upon me and to make me a better believer, cleanse my heart and grant me further strength to serve Him and the Ummah of His Beloved, *ṣallā Allahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*.

As for the creation, I begin by thanking Ustādh Muhammad Jalaluddeen of Nawa Books, once again, for taking on the beautiful project of translating and publishing the Pinnacle Papers into English, this book being the third volume in the series. May Allah reward him immensely in this life and the next, protect him from harm, and grant him a long, healthy life full of worship and righteousness, āmīn!

I must also thank Dr Maḥmūd Ramaḍān for his constant support and for always being on hand to answer questions May Allah reward him, his father, his grandfather, and his entire family in abundance in this life and the next, āmīn!

For proofreading, I ask Allah to reward my dear friend Hazem Mahdy who, as I have mentioned before, speaks both Arabic and English like a native. Again, he read both the Arabic text and the translation and made sure that everything was not only correct but also readable. May Allah reward him repeatedly in this life and in the Here-

after, āmīn! Ustādh Jalaluddeen has also read over the text and made crucial recommendations, but I must stress, however, that any errors or shortcomings that still remain are solely my responsibility. We praise Allah the Exalted for any benefit that comes out of this work. Only the mistakes are mine.

Lastly, I thank my wife for her patience, serenity and encouragement throughout the translation process. May Allah reward her and her parents immensely, āmīn!

As for the book itself, it is concise and beautifully written. Like his other books that focus on a Qur'ānic theme or topic, such as *The Approach to Human Civilization in the Qur'ān*, Imam al-Būṭī, may Allah have mercy on him, reminds that if we want knowledge, our starting point must always be the Qur'ān, it must always be Allah's revelation. Likewise, our worldly pursuits, whatever they may be, must be guided by the Qur'ān. If they are not, failure is the inevitable result. Pedagogy, no matter how old the student is, is no different.

In the third part of the book, after discussing rational deliberation and lessons from history, the imam discusses the use of emotional stimulation in pedagogy, and shows that Allah always deals with us in a way that benefits us. Emotion is never used merely to stimulate us for no purpose, but to reinforce the knowledge that Allah is giving us. For example, in Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt, Allah does not simply command us to refrain from backbiting. He also describes it as eating the dead flesh of one's brother and asks if we would love to do such a thing. He then tells us that we would despise it. This is an illustration followed by a question that both seek to elicit an emotional response, but the objective is to reinforce the fact that backbiting is unlawful. This is how parents should be with children: do not use emotions haphazardly. Rather, use emotion to make your children understand why something is wrong.

Another example in which Allah elicits emotion is in His command to be good to your parents, in the 23rd verse of Sūrat al-Isrā'. Allah says:

﴿وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوٓاْ إِلَّآ إِيَّاهُ وَبِٱلْوَٰلِدَيْنِ إِحْسَٰنًا ۚ إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِندَكَ ٱلْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَآ أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُل لَّهُمَآ أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُل لَّهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا﴾

"Your Lord has decreed that you should worship none but Him, and you should show kindness to your parents. Whether one or both of them reach old age with you, do not say 'Uff!' to them out of irritation and do not be harsh with them, but speak to them with gentleness and generosity."

Allah uses a very simple expression to drive home the beauty of taking care of elderly parents. He says *'indak*, i.e. 'with you', which automatically implies that they are not growing old alone with no one to look after them. Rather, they are with you, being loved and looked after.[2]

May Allah grant us all the *tawfīq* to act upon the precious knowledge found in these pages, for all *tawfīq* is by Him alone.

1 I must also thank Sister Lubābah al-Qāsim for drawing these points to my attention. May Allah reward her in abundance, āmīn!

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Mahdi Lock is a professional freelance translator of classical Arabic Islamic texts into English. He has a BA in Arabic and History from the University of Leeds, an MA in Arabic Linguistics from King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah, and a Diploma in Translation from the Chartered Institute of Linguists in London, of which he is also a Member (MCIL). He has been studying theology, law and other Islamic sciences for several years with teachers in England, North Africa and the Middle East. To date, his translated works include Kitāb al-Ḥalāl wa al-Ḥarām by Imam Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, Kitāb al-Waqf from al-Mughnī al-Muḥtāj by al-Khaṭīb al-Shirbīnī, the introduction to al-Majmūʿ by Imam Yaḥyā al-Nawawī and Sharḥ al-Ṣudūr by Imam Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī.

FOREWORD - ARABIC

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام على سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين.

وبعد:

هذا الكتاب الصغير في حجمه المهم في موضوعه، يظهر للقارئ جانباً من عظمة القرآن، مما يؤكد للمتأمل فيه أن القرآن الذي بلغنا إياه رجل أمي نشأ في أمة أمية، وعرف بالصدق والأمانة منذ طفولته، معجز يجعل المرء يقف منه أمام بحر من العجائب التي لا ساحل لها. فهو معجزة في فصاحته وبلاغته، وهو نظام حياة، وهو تربية وجدانية تسمو بالمرء في علاقته مع ربه ومع نفسه ومع أخيه الإنسان إلى أسمى ما تكون العلاقة.

وفي هذا الكتاب يضعنا العلامة الشهيد من كتاب الله أمام منهج تربوي متكامل يسمو بالإنسان إلى مرتبة رفيعة ضمن ثلاثة أسس: المحاكمة العقلية - والعبرة والتاريخ - والإثارة الوجدانية.

مقدراً أهمية العقل في توجيه الإنسان، ثم توظيف تاريخ الأمم والشعوب والأفراد للعبرة والعظة، وأخيراً استثمار الجانب الوجداني بما يتضمنه من عواطف ومشاعر للوصول بالإنسان إلى الثمرة العملية للقناعة العقلية والعبرة التاريخية.

إنني لأشكر أخي الأستاذ مهدي لوك على جهده الطيب في ترجمة هذا الكتاب إلى اللغة الإنكليزية ليصل القراء الناطقون بالإنكليزية فيه إلى الوقوف على مدى عظمة كتاب الله في منهجه التربوي، من خلال عرض قليلة صفحاته واسعة معانيه عسى أن يكون مصباحاً لهم إلى صلة أوثق بكتاب الله تعالى، وإلى منهج تربوي يسمو بالإنسان إلى الأخلاق الكريمة والسلوك السوي. والحمد لله رب العالمين.

محمد توفيق رمضان البوطي

FOREWORD - ENGLISH

In the Name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Most Merciful

All praise be to Allah, Lord of all Creation, and blessings and peace be upon our master Muḥammad, and upon all of his Family and his Companions.

To proceed:

This short yet important book shows the reader an aspect of the Qur'ān's sublimity that confirms for the one who reflects that this Qur'ān, which has reached us via an unlettered man who grew up amongst an unlettered nation, who was known for his honesty and trustworthiness from his childhood, is indeed inimitable. It is as if one is standing in front of an endless ocean. It is a miracle in its eloquence and rhetoric. It is a way of life. It provides an emotional education by which a person in his relationship with his Lord, with himself, and with his brother man reaches the loftiest heights that a relationship can aspire to.

In this book, the great scholar and martyr places us in front of a consummate pedagogical approach by which man reaches an elevated plain, and it is based on three foundations: rational deliberation, lessons from history, and emotional stimulation.

It starts by appraising and appreciating the intellect's importance in directing man, followed by using the history of nations, peoples, and individuals as lessons and admonitions. Finally, it looks at the utilisation of the emotional aspect, in that it includes feelings and emotions that help man attain the desired scientific benefit from his rational conviction and those lessons from history.

I thank our brother, Ustādh Mahdi Lock, for his efforts in translating this book into English so that English speakers can learn how sublime Allah's Book is in its pedagogical approach, through a presentation that is only a few pages but is vast in meaning. Maybe it will be a lamp for them that will lead them to having a stronger bond with Allah the Exalted's Book, and to a pedagogical approach that will elevate man to noble character and sound conduct.

And praise be to Allah, Lord of all Creation.

Muḥammad Tawfīq Ramaḍān al-Būṭī

INTRODUCTION

All praise is due to Allah, praise that complies with His blessings and compensates His abundance. Glory be to You! O Allah, I cannot sufficiently enumerate praises upon You; You are as You have praised Yourself. And blessings and peace be upon our master Muḥammad and all of his Family and Companions.

To proceed:

The pedagogical approaches that are imposed upon our children in schools are still a patchwork of foreign theories that have been transferred to us after being formulated in a clear Arabic tongue or one that is unclear. While this transfer was happening, no one noticed the massive difference between the nature of those foreign souls who formulated these theories according to their scope and temperament, on the one hand, and the nature of the Muslim souls that have been imbued with the natural disposition of Islam and have grown up under its wing and protection, regardless of how strong or weak its influence is upon society!

It is known that just as the pedagogical approaches affect the path of learning and behaviour, they are also affected – as they emerge – by the behaviour, philosophy, and ways of knowledge and understanding that are firmly rooted in that society.

There is no doubt that these approaches are only compatible with the society in which they emerged and with which they have interacted. It is foolish for us to imagine that its harmony with the mindset and mentality under whose auspices it originated is a sound criterion for measuring its harmony with any other mindset or mentality that did not originate under its auspices, and from which it has derived its logical and intellectual rules and teachings.

Let us look at the example of religion. In European society, in its foundations and teachings, religion is nothing more than emotional and sentimental stimuli. This is why their approaches to religious education are based on mere emotional excitations, and oftentimes they incline away, or are far removed, from the authority of the mind and intellect.

This is why religion itself is a social phenomenon for Europeans.

Religion for us – which is Islam – is based on firmly established, rational foundations and requirements in both its doctrines and principles; logic and thinking are encouraged in order to understand them.

If our religious education were to borrow those merely social and emotional approaches, the result would be a devastating failure, and there would be no sound educational result to show for it. And it is known that the general structure of our approaches to religious education is taken from pedagogical foundations and methods that are followed in the West.

Creed (*al-ʿaqīdah*) – according to one of the philosophical and pedagogical theories in the West – must originate under the auspices of will and in accordance with desire.

This is because the desire for something (and this desire can only be subordinate to some purpose) is that which places in the mind the incentives to have firm conviction in the universe or existence, according to the requirements of that desire.

And these pedagogical approaches, for them, must make it easy for these incentives to reach the intellect.[2]

Creed for us, and the facts of Islam itself that it imposes upon us, must be the absolute foundation for human will and desires however they may differ. Thus, will and desire have no choice other than to be subordinate to what the absolute, pure creed has prescribed.

Therefore, its starting point, in coming into existence, had to be from scratch or nothing – as al-Ghazālī affirms – and there is nothing alongside it except the tools of the pure intellect and pure logic, provided that they are sound and fully functional.

For us, the pedagogical approaches pave the way towards the creed and that way is absolutely free.

However, despite this, in order to nurture this sound creed in our children's hearts, we are borrowing pedagogical approaches that are fiercely opposed to it, and are built upon foundations that are completely incompatible with it and cannot be reconciled.

It is strange that none of our people who are concerned with pedagogical matters have ever seriously considered the danger of this

2 To know more about this theory and its pedagogical effects, see *The Will to Believe* and "Reason and Religion" by William James. (tn): "Reason and Religion" is the second part of *The Will to Believe*.

disgraceful confusion. **If only it were just confusion!** It is a manifestation of severe, wretched poverty, which makes someone beg for a pair of trousers so that he can wear it on his head, and take a necktie and wear it as a sock on his foot.

It is a manifestation of astonishing humiliation, provoking a mixture of contempt and pity in the soul.

What is its secret and source?

The secret is embodied in these two phenomena:

The first phenomenon is that both pedagogy and educational psychology as they are today have arisen out of foreign experiences and theories; they have nothing in common with Islamic – or Arabic, if you will – thought apart from transmission and translation.

Thus, the mindset of the specialist in this field must be a trustworthy conduit in maintaining these foreign experiments and theories, and it is not just this. Indeed, his mindset's being influenced by it and his remaining under its burden and weight means that he is not convinced or even aware of the existence of other pedagogical principles and foundations outside of the scope that his mindset and mentality have settled in. Thus, he does not stop trying to subjugate his society to those requirements, regardless of whatever contradiction and disarray he sees between the two.

The second phenomenon is that most of the specialists that we have in pedagogy and its foundations have only opened their minds to western culture. Thus, religion, regardless of whatever intellectual authority it has in our view, remains, in their self-delusion, dependent on the same factors and scales that religion is based on in western societies.

Moral values, regardless of the fact that for us they are attributed to fundamental, theological roots that are connected to the reality of the universe and belief in the Creator, are seen by them as emanating from those conflicting philosophical theories that, in the end, are all relative and subjective.

When they want to express the sanctity that characterises Islamic morals, and which grants them a proper meaning that resides within their depths, they cannot find a more truthful word than **"traditions"** (*at-taqālīd*), as they try to create an imaginary, false sanctity for this word, so that there can be harmony between it and those morals.

If they were to survey Islamic culture properly, as embodied in Allah the Exalted's Book and in the Sunnah of His Messenger ﷺ, and at the same time study Islamic history and the development of Islamic thought, they would become aware of the massive barrier that stands between our understanding of values and how westerners understand them.

They would realise that the detailed pedagogical theories they have over there cannot possibly be used in pedagogical approaches here.

They would also learn that a pedagogical researcher could indeed arrive at other pedagogical foundations that are sound and derived from the foundations of Islamic culture and its rich sources, which gave the world an authentic civilisation that it enjoyed for several centuries.

That knowledge would push them towards continuous research and investigation, which would lead to their producing a new pedagogical field that is independent of those imported theories and experiments. It would bear qualities and characteristics that agree with the natural disposition of this Ummah and particular characteristics of its formation.

These two phenomena are the secret behind this problem. Indeed, it is the secret behind the Islamic Ummah's – or the Arabic if you will – need for original pedagogical approaches that grow out of its own soil, that agree with its values, and are in harmony with its objectives and principles.

If it were not for these two phenomena, **we would have to ask in astonishment:**

Why are Islamic libraries today replete with modern books about the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān and its rhetoric and morals but there is not a single book about its pedagogical methods and approach for teaching and persuading?[3]

However, the answer is known. The scholars of Arabic and literature would not possess the subject matter of their sciences were it not for the Qur'ān, its style, and its history. This connection allows them to learn more about its particular characteristics and qualities in terms of language and rhetoric.

As for the scholars of pedagogy, the subject matter of their sciences comes from the theories and experiences of a group of westerners, and their role therein has been one of nothing more than transmission and translation, as we have already stated. Sometimes, however, the translations are accurate and reliable, and other times they are distorted, feigning creativity and invention,

Because they are cut off from the Qur'ān and the amazing sciences and knowledge that it contains, they remain in that state: **they import and they do not invent, and they light dim candles under the brilliant rays of the sun!**

3 We say "its pedagogical approach" so as not to include research into its pedagogical foundations and principles, for a group of researchers have written about the latter. As for research into its pedagogical approach and method, an independent work on the matter is yet to appear..

It is part of Allah's immense favour upon me that He planted the love of His Sublime Book in my heart from a very young age. I trembled with joy when I recited it even though I was only proficient in reciting its words. I only knew a little bit about its meanings and objectives.

And it is because of His favour that I acquired much knowledge of Arabic and its literature, or I thoroughly tasted its rhetoric and its arts.

Indeed, it is entirely because of His favour that my soul was drawn towards it and I loved to devote myself to the Revealed Law and its sciences.

I arrived at absolute certainty that the best way to establish the creed of faith in Allah and the Last Day in the soul **is nothing other than the Qur'ān**. The best way to open up the mind to the horizons of human sciences and knowledge **is the Qur'ān**. The best tranquillity and contentment that is poured into the heart is the Qur'ān, and the best language with which to have an intimate conversation with your Lord in the pre-dawn stillness is the language of the Qur'ān.

When I joined the Department of Specialisation in Education in the Arabic Language Faculty at Al-Azhar University, and I started learning about the principles of education and educational psychology, I noticed that the method in which we were studying these sciences was detracting from the honour of Al-Azhar and its history.

I asked myself: are the teachers at Al-Azhar who are teaching their students pedagogical principles and approaches only able to teach the oddities of Herbert, Dalton, and John Dewey?

Is it not possible to derive methodologies and approaches from Allah the Exalted's Sublime Book, and the entire history of Islamic culture, in order to raise the up and coming Muslim generation in a way that is more suitable and superior to these foreign experiences that grew in a land that is not our land, were applied to a mindset that is not our mindset, and were adopted by souls whose natural disposition does not accord with ours?

Since that time, I have been reflecting on Allah the Exalted's Book with the mind of an educational researcher, and I know that what I have to offer in this matter is paltry. Nevertheless, I firmly believed that this Book, which has raised generations of people who have different souls, mindsets, cultures, and temperaments and then moulded them into one human soul; **this Book, in the foundations of its call and the methods of its pedagogy, should be based on brilliant and exemplary pedagogical foundations.** In order to disclose these foundations, one only needs to study this Majestic Book as it deserves to be studied, thoroughly and correctly. Then one should be sincere in devoting oneself to extracting those foundations, formulating them, and putting them in a framework in which rules can be derived and supported by evidence from the Book.

Despite having little to offer in the field of education and its sciences, this reflection guided me towards unique pedagogical approaches in Allah's Book ﷻ.

The means of mastering the soul and delivering demonstrative truths to the intellect that I have seen in this amazing, miraculous Book, is what people of intellect and insight toil for. And there is no doubt that what I was guided towards was not even a drop in the ocean.

The field is not my field, but it is the field of those who have devoted their scientific specialisations to education and its principles. It is

not my field, but it is an overflowing ocean every time I look at it with discernment and knowledge. This knowledge guided me towards the abundant secrets of other amazing knowledge.

Despite that, I decided to hold on to this small drop that I had found and write it down in this short book, so that I can make a template that will draw the attention of educational scholars towards the hidden contents of this amazing and sublime Book.

Maybe their sincerity towards their scientific specialisation – if their hearts have been emptied of other doctrinal or religious motives – will push them towards reciting this sublime Book and then studying it and learning it. After that, maybe they will refrain from chasing after those foreign experiences and theories, which they confine their scientific specialisations to and never step outside of, and analyse them and praise them, and thus use the hidden contents of Allah the Exalted's Book to create new principles and theories in this field. They will hold the honour of creativity amongst their peoples, and on top of that, they will have an immense reward with their Lord.

And maybe, alongside them, I will have a small share of that reward, for the Prophet ﷺ said in what has been related by Muslim and others: {Whoever guides towards something good has the same reward as the one who does it.}

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH IN THE QUR'ĀN

Preface:

There is a unique pedagogical approach in the Qur'ān, and it also contains unique pedagogical principles. **There is a massive difference between the two.**

As for the pedagogical approach, it is the path that the Qur'ān takes the Muslim along towards following its principles and adhering to its rulings.

As for the pedagogical principles, they are those rulings, systems and values that it has firmly established and called to, which are based on refining the individual and improving his manners and conduct. These include the rulings of what is lawful and unlawful as well as the various moral values that the Qur'ān calls to.

When we say "**the pedagogical approach**"[3], we mean the way and path and the manifestations of temptation therein. We are not talking about the aforementioned values and rulings at all.

3 Ar. *al-manhaj at-tarbawi*.

Furthermore, what we mean is the pedagogical approach that is distinguished by being formulated by the Qur'ān alone, not that which is characterised by Islam in general. This is because Islam – in that it is a religion – is considered in its totality to be the pedagogical approach for the human essence, represented in the soul, the body, and the mind, so that it can reach its innate, original level.

Moreover, the Qur'ānic approach, which is the subject of our discussion in this treatise, branches out into many disciplines, branches, and minor subdivisions. It would take a long time for us to go into them in detail and analyse each one.

Instead, we shall take into consideration its most important universal foundations and pillars, and we shall study each one thoroughly. This will reveal the extent of their importance in the field of general pedagogy, and the extent to which educators, in all fields of education, need to be guided by them and to depend on them.

Becoming aware of these important foundations will lead us to pursuinstudies and research, and then to extracting new and wonderful methodological values therein, values that scholars of pedagogy should have been aware of ever since pedagogy became a discipline, or indeed an independent science in and of itself, and ever since it attained the same importance as all other types and stages of education.

This is what we mean by studying "**the pedagogical approach in the Qur'ān**" in this short, quickly compiled work. Therefore, the foundations that the Qur'ānic approach to pedagogy is based on are no more than the following three foundations:

1. **Rational deliberation**
2. **Lessons from history**
3. **Emotional stimulation**

All the pedagogical means that you see in the Qur'ān – regardless of how they differ – emanate from one of these three foundations, revolve around its pivot, and proceed according to its requirements.

They are also foundations that are distinct from one another but in their totality form an indispensable ladder with which the soul and mind can ascend to the elevated and noble level that the original, human disposition is still inclined towards.

The intellect alone cannot win the confidence of the soul unless it is supported by evidence from the real world that confirms it, and that is where history comes in, with its events and lessons. Even after it has acquired this confidence from the soul, it cannot overcome it such that it can lead it and direct it, if it has not mobilised an army of emotions and yearnings, and this is where emotional incitement comes in.

When these three factors come together in the human essence and they lead him in a certain direction, nothing stands in their way, and no barrier can prevent them from reaching their destination.

And a person does not fail to be dyed with a certain reality, and is prevented from fully adhering to it, unless one of these factors has not carried out its desired function in serving this reality, unveiling it, and facilitating the path towards it.

Therefore, we will look at how the Qur'ān subjugates each of these three foundations or factors for the sake of educating man and leading towards the path of felicity and integrity of conduct.

RATIONAL DELIBERATION

The "rational deliberation" in the Qur'ān is composed of three aspects:

1. Identifying man himself
2. Choosing a way that is suited to the mental faculties of all people
3. Relying on discussion and dialogue

We shall analyse each of these aspects separately.

The first aspect:

Identifying man himself before everything else:

The Qur'ān begins its address to mankind by instructing them to look at and reflect on themselves, by talking about man's origins, his reality, and how he emerged and increased in number.

This is very clear in the first verses that were revealed, and you will find the same in the first few pages of the written Qur'ān.

The first verses that were revealed identify man and his essence, and they are the Exalted One's statement:

﴿ٱقۡرَأۡ بِٱسۡمِ رَبِّكَ ٱلَّذِي خَلَقَ ۝١ خَلَقَ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنَ مِنۡ عَلَقٍ ۝٢
ٱقۡرَأۡ وَرَبُّكَ ٱلۡأَكۡرَمُ ۝٣ ٱلَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِٱلۡقَلَمِ ۝٤ عَلَّمَ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنَ مَا لَمۡ يَعۡلَمۡ﴾

"Recite: In the name of your Lord who created, created man from clots of blood. Recite: And your Lord is the Most Generous, He who taught by the pen, taught humanity what they knew not." [al-'Alaq 96:1-5]

You can see that Allah ﷻ did not draw mans attention to Allah's lordship and oneness except by directing him towards his essence and the origin of his creation and emergence.

The first few pages of Sūrat al-Baqarah – which constitute the beginning of the Qur'ān in terms of the final text – identify the categories of man in this worldly life: the believers, the deniers, and the hypocrites. Then they draw attention to the story of man's origin, how he multiplied, and what his final destination is.

Then it repeatedly draws attention to this story whenever the need calls for it, i.e. whenever the matter necessitates that his attention be drawn to something of the signs and evidence of the universe and events and happenings of nations, in order to demonstrate the existence of the Creator ﷻ, His Oneness, and the Last Day, as well as matters and events that are connected to it.

This preparatory beginning has an immense pedagogical importance, and that is because all the knowledge that man acquires are

nothing but a branch of a previous knowledge, which is his knowledge of his essence. Without this primary knowledge, it is not possible for man to have a sound measure for the other, branches of knowledge.

Were it not for your faith in the intellect and its function, you would not believe in any of its utterances and judgements. Were it not for your knowledge of your psychical and physical constitution, you would not know anything about the realities of the universe that surround you, and you would not comprehend any connection between you and them.

Therefore, to the extent that you have accurate and sound knowledge of your essence, your knowledge of the realities and functions of the universe will be accurate and sound.

Conversely, if one still does not have accurate knowledge of his essence and the limits of his abilities, it is not possible for him to have knowledge of Allah's divinity over him, or to have a correct creed regarding the story of this universe, the course it is following, and its end.

This is because the researcher's confidence in himself and his essence is considered the source of his confidence and faith in the theories and judgements that this essence presents to him.

When the researcher loses this confidence in himself and in his intellect, or that confidence is deceptive and not sound, he also loses confidence in all the knowledge and information that his soul conveys to him, or he accepts them mistakenly and erroneously, without relying on a true or sound foundation.

Consider this. The reason why those who deny Allah deny Him, and they establish false thrones of lordship for themselves on earth, is

because their eyes are still causing them to turn away from that which surrounds them, without letting them wake up for a single moment in order to contemplate and reflect – truthfully – on themselves.

Due to this fact and the extent of its importance, the Qur'ān starts its rational deliberation with those who deny by turning their attention towards themselves and the story of their existence, so that when their ears are ready to listen, it starts talking to them about Allah's existence and His oneness, and man's slavehood to Him.

Contemplate this phenomenon in the following verses:

﴿فَلْيَنظُرِ ٱلْإِنسَـٰنُ مِمَّ خُلِقَ ۝٥ خُلِقَ مِن مَّآءٍ دَافِقٍ ۝٦ يَخْرُجُ مِنۢ بَيْنِ ٱلصُّلْبِ وَٱلتَّرَآئِبِ ۝٧ إِنَّهُۥ عَلَىٰ رَجْعِهِۦ لَقَادِرٌ﴾

"Man only has to look at what he was created from. He was created from a spurting fluid, emerging from between the backbone and the breastbone. He certainly has the power to return him to life." [at-Ṭāriq 86:5-8]

﴿يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِن كُنتُمْ فِى رَيْبٍ مِّنَ ٱلْبَعْثِ فَإِنَّا خَلَقْنَـٰكُم مِّن تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ مِن مُّضْغَةٍ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ وَغَيْرِ مُخَلَّقَةٍ لِّنُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ ۚ وَنُقِرُّ فِى ٱلْأَرْحَامِ مَا نَشَآءُ إِلَىٰٓ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ نُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوٓا۟ أَشُدَّكُمْ ۖ وَمِنكُم مَّن يُتَوَفَّىٰ وَمِنكُم مَّن يُرَدُّ إِلَىٰٓ أَرْذَلِ ٱلْعُمُرِ لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ مِنۢ بَعْدِ عِلْمٍ شَيْـًٔا﴾

"O mankind! If you are in doubt about the Resurrection, know that we created you from dust, then from a drop of sperm, then from a clot of blood, then from a lump of flesh, formed yet un-

formed, so We may make things clear to you. We make whatever we want stay in the womb until a specified time, and then we bring you out as children so that you may reach your full maturity. Some of you die, and some of you revert to the lowest form of life so that, after having knowledge, they then know nothing at all." [al-Ḥajj 22:5]

﴿وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا ٱلْإِنسَـٰنَ مِن سُلَـٰلَةٍ مِّن طِينٍ ﴿١٢﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَـٰهُ نُطْفَةً فِى قَرَارٍ مَّكِينٍ ﴿١٣﴾ ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا ٱلنُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا ٱلْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا ٱلْمُضْغَةَ عِظَـٰمًا فَكَسَوْنَا ٱلْعِظَـٰمَ لَحْمًا ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَـٰهُ خَلْقًا ءَاخَرَ ۚ فَتَبَارَكَ ٱللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ ٱلْخَـٰلِقِينَ﴾

"We created man from the purest kind of clay; then made him a drop in a secure receptacle; then formed the drop into a clot and formed the clot into a lump and formed the lump into bones and clothed the bones in flesh; and then brought him into being as another creature. Blessed be Allah, the Best of Creators!" [al-Mu'minūn 23:12-14]

When you reflect on these and similar verses, you find that they are drawing your attention to the reality of this universe, and that it is under the subjugation, system, and planning of one god to whom all of creation submits in judgment and obedience. Thus, they pave the way for this fact to be disclosed before the human intellect.

When you reflect on this, you find that the Qur'ān does not analyse the phenomena of the universe with a great deal of detail and concern or discuss its origin and its development in various ways, as it does when talking about man.

The wisdom behind this is that identifying man as he truly is and his origin is the only pedagogical way to convince the intellect of the reality upon which the emergence of this universe in and of itself is based on.

The second aspect:

Choosing a style that is suited to all people, despite their different environments, cultures, and times:

There is no way to draw people towards the sought principle if the way to call them and teach them is only suited to one group of them and no one else.

The most difficult condition for a pedagogical approach that one wants a mixed mass of people to follow, and which causes many preachers to fail – in terms of the approach and method – is to have a way of speaking and elucidation that can be understood by everyone who is listening or learning.

This is why, in this aspect, the greatest manifestation of the Qur'ān's inimitability is represented! **The formulation of this amazing Book is such that it is within the perceptual capacity of every group of people to grasp it,** without leading to any defect in how they are made to understand nor any contradiction in their respective understandings.

We do not mean by this that all of them are capable – if they want to – of understanding it without being informed or taught. Rather, a sufficient knowledge of Arabic, its grammatical rules and linguistic styles, is indispensable.

Nevertheless, all people are equal in understanding what the Qur'ān is telling them, regardless of their different cultures, once they have acquired that sufficient amount of knowledge and learning.

Look at the Exalted One's statement when he draws people's attention to the brilliance of divine genesis in the creation and ordering of the universe:

﴿أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ ٱلْأَرْضَ كِفَاتًا ﴿٢٥﴾ أَحْيَآءً وَأَمْوَٰتًا ﴿٢٦﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا رَوَٰسِيَ شَٰمِخَٰتٍ﴾

"Did we not make the earth a receptacle for the living and the dead? Did we not place firmly embedded mountains on it, soaring high into the air? [al-Mursalāt 77:25-27]

Contemplate the word *kifāta*,[5] which means to attract and join. The poet used it when he said:

He is so generous when the vipers gather together[6]

In their stones of ice and frost

The earth is described with this word in a way that desert Arab can understand. He would understand from it that the earth is like a vessel that protects and preserves whatever it contains, which is a correct understanding. That is how the earth is.

Then we look at how this description is understood by those who specialise and have penetrated deeply into studying the earth and the celestial bodies. Thābit ibn Qurrah (221-288 AH) understood that man is only settled on the earth because of a hidden force that attracts him to it.[7] Were it not for this force, he would not be able to settle on it, and it is the same force that is now called gravity.

5 (tn): i.e. receptacle.

6 Ar. *tankafitu*, which is a verb from the same root as *kifat*.

7 See *Al-Mawaqif*, 1/273.

There is no word that contains this spectrum of meanings, starting with what the desert Arab understands through to what scientists understand today, like the word *kifāta*.

And look at what the Exalted One says when He draws attention to another aspect of the earth's description:

﴿وَٱلْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ دَحَىٰهَآ ۝ أَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا مَآءَهَا وَمَرْعَىٰهَا﴾

"After that, He smoothed out the earth and brought forth from it its water and its pastureland." [an-Nāziʿāt 79:30-31]

The word *daḥāha*[8] bears a few meanings in Arabic. One is to spread out.[9] Another is to exalt or enlarge.[10] Yet another is to rotate or to revolve,[11] or to roll up or make something into the shape of a ball,[12] as is explained in *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*. All of these meanings are true and applicable to the earth, for it is spread out, immense, and round.

As for the desert Arab, he will understand the first and second meanings. As for the seasoned astronomer, he will understand all three meanings, without there being any contradiction between them, as is clear.[13]

Look at what the Exalted One's says when he draws attention to fire and its benefits in the life of man:

﴿أَفَرَءَيْتُمُ ٱلنَّارَ ٱلَّتِى تُورُونَ ۝ ءَأَنتُمْ أَنشَأْتُمْ شَجَرَتَهَآ أَمْ نَحْنُ ٱلْمُنشِـُٔونَ ۝
نَحْنُ جَعَلْنَـٰهَا تَذْكِرَةً وَمَتَـٰعًا لِّلْمُقْوِينَ﴾

8 (tn): i.e. He smoothed out.
9 Ar. *basaṭa*.
10 Ar. *ʿaẓama*.
11 Ar. *dawwara*.
12 Ar. *kawwara*.
13 See further details on this topic in our book *Min Rawāʾiʿ al-Qurʾān*.

"Have you thought about the fire that you light? Is it you who make the trees that fuel it grow or are We the grower? We have made it to be a reminder and a comfort for *muqwīn*." [al-Wāqiʿah 56:71-73]

The word *muqwīn* is the plural of *muqwin* and it bears the meaning of alighting in the *qawā'*, i.e. the desert. It can also refer to someone who is hungry[14] as well as someone who is enjoying himself.[15] The first meaning is in the poet's statement:

O abode of Miyyah[16]*, ascribed to loftiness*

It had settled in the desert, and was there in previous ages

The second meaning is found in the statement of Ḥātim at-Ṭā'ī:

And I would choose hunger, to have my insides starve

To protect myself from being called ignoble

As for the desert Arab, it is the first meaning that would immediately come to his mind, because fire is considered a great pleasure for those who reside in the desert. It is how they know one another's homes, what they use to illuminate their surroundings, and around it is how they gather.

As for the typical urban man, it is the second meaning that would immediately come to his mind, because for city people, its greatest benefit is that it is an indispensable means of cooking and preparing food. Thus, it is a necessary and important commodity for the *muqwīn*, i.e. those who are hungry.

14 Ar. *al-jā'iʿ*.
15 Ar. *al-mustamtiʿ*.
16 (tn): this is a girl's name.

As for the third meaning, it is left open for developments that are made over time, for there is no type of enjoyment or benefit that urban life or science have discovered except that it is included in the Exalted One's statement: **"...and comfort for the *muqwīn*"**. The modern man can understand this third meaning of the verse, without any difficulty or need for explanation.

Look at what He says when he describes the sun and the moon according to their most prominent distinguishing features:

﴿تَبَارَكَ ٱلَّذِى جَعَلَ فِى ٱلسَّمَآءِ بُرُوجًا وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا سِرَٰجًا وَقَمَرًا مُّنِيرًا﴾

"Blessed be He who placed constellations in the sky and put a blazing lamp and shining moon among them." [al-Furqān 25:61]

And look at what He says on the same subject:

﴿أَلَمْ تَرَوْا۟ كَيْفَ خَلَقَ ٱللَّهُ سَبْعَ سَمَٰوَٰتٍ طِبَاقًا ﴿١٥﴾
وَجَعَلَ ٱلْقَمَرَ فِيهِنَّ نُورًا وَجَعَلَ ٱلشَّمْسَ سِرَاجًا﴾

"Do you not see how He created seven skies in layers, and placed the moon as a light in them and made the sun a blazing lamp?" [Nūḥ 71:15-16]

He also says:

﴿هُوَ ٱلَّذِى جَعَلَ ٱلشَّمْسَ ضِيَآءً وَٱلْقَمَرَ نُورًا﴾

"It is He who appointed the sun to give radiance, and the moon to give light..." [Yūnus 10:5]

You can see that He describes the sun as being a blazing lamp[17] and something that gives radiance,[18] while the moon is a light[19] or something that shines.[20] It is a very accurate description that includes different meanings according to people's respective levels of education, and the extent to which each of them has the capacity to understand. All the meanings are confirmed for both the sun and the moon.

Desert Arabs will understand these descriptives of both according to their broader, shared meaning, which is unqualified light; the words *sirāj* and *nūr* bear this shared meaning.

Educated people will understand – in addition to the aforementioned – that the sun gives off heat as well as light, while the moons gives off light but not heat. This is because something that gives off light cannot be called a *sirāj* unless it also gives off heat.

As for astronomers, and the generality of those who understand the nature of both the sun and the moon, they understand from these two descriptives – if they have knowledge and understanding of the Arabic language – that the verse talks about the light of the sun shining from its interior, while the *light* of the moon merely reflects off of it from another mass. That is the fine linguistic difference between the two words.

You can describe a room as being shining or bright, but you would not describe it as being a *sirāj*, because the light in the room is merely a reflection of the light coming from the lamp inside the room. A *sirāj* is something that emits light from within itself.

Imam al-Bayḍāwī says regarding the Exalted One's statement: **"It is He who appointed the sun to give radiance, and the moon to**

17 Ar. *siraj*.
18 Ar. *ḍiya'*.
19 Ar. *nur*.
20 Ar. *munir*.

give light..." [Yūnus 10:5] – after elucidating how both the sun and the moon are described –: 'He ﷻ has drawn attention to the fact that He created the sun to be intrinsically luminous, while the moon is extrinsically luminous, as it reflects the sun's light.'[21]

The evidence for this amazing pedagogical aspect in Allah the Exalted's Book are plenty indeed, and, if not for the fact that it would take us away from the scope of our discussion, it would be beneficial to look at more examples.

In any case, it suffices you to know that the Qur'ān makes the intellect the arbiter regarding the realities of the universe and the true nature of matters, because it chooses a style, formulation, and words that suit people's intellects and their respective capacities to grasp and understand, without causing any confusion regarding what is understood or the different meanings.

One of the requirements of this pedagogical wisdom is that the Qur'ānic formulation – when discussing cosmic matters – be far removed from narrow, scientific terminology. Otherwise, the Qur'ān's address would only be suited to a small group of people.

Another requirement is that the Qur'ānic formulation – when discussing these same matters – provokes and inspires research and investigation, and does not obligate people to believe in them just because they are being informed of them but without seeing them.

21 See *Ḥāshiyat ash-Shaykh Zadah 'alà al-Baydāwī* as well as the *tafsīrs* of Abū as-Su'ūd and al-Fakhr ar-Rāzī on this āyah.

If this were not the case, it would necessitate that people be obligated to confirm these scientific matters, in accordance with what the Qur'ān has informed of, without relying therein on any of the means of experience and observation, which are the natural and original means of arriving at scientific facts about the universe. Allah has ennobled the human intellect to be above that.

This is why you see Him saying:

﴿قُلِ ٱنظُرُواْ مَاذَا فِي ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ﴾

"Say: 'Look at what is in the skies and on the earth.'" [Yūnus 10:101]

﴿وَفِيٓ أَنفُسِكُمْ ۚ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ﴾

"And in yourselves as well. Do you not then see?" [adh-Dhāriyāt 51:20]

﴿إِنَّ فِي ٱخْتِلَٰفِ ٱلَّيْلِ وَٱلنَّهَارِ وَمَا خَلَقَ ٱللَّهُ فِي ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ لَءَايَٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَّقُونَ﴾

"In the alternation of night and day and what Allah has created in the skies and the earth, there are signs for people who have taqwā." [Yūnus 10:6]

﴿قُلْ سِيرُواْ فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ فَٱنظُرُواْ كَيْفَ بَدَأَ ٱلْخَلْقَ ۚ ثُمَّ ٱللَّهُ يُنشِئُ ٱلنَّشْأَةَ ٱلْأَخِرَةَ﴾

"Say: 'Travel about the earth and see how He brought creation out of nothing. Then later Allah will bring about the next existence." [al-'Ankabūt 29:20]

When the verses of the Qur'ān encourage more and more research into the realities of science and the intricacies of the universe, they do not go beyond affirming the principle of harmony and precise order and planning in its parts and formation. Or, they will describe some prominent, superficial phenomena that are subject to the senses of sight, hearing, or touch, or they will join between them and the means of human life, and clarify how important they are for man's needs, and how they are compatible with the nature of his life.

For example, He ﷻ says:

﴿وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَقَدَّرَهُۥ تَقْدِيرًا﴾

"He created everything and determined it most exactly." [al-Furqān 25:2]

﴿إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَٰهُ بِقَدَرٍ﴾

"We have created all things in due measure." [al-Qamar 54:49]

﴿وَإِن مِّن شَيْءٍ إِلَّا عِندَنَا خَزَآئِنُهُۥ وَمَا نُنَزِّلُهُۥٓ إِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَّعْلُومٍ﴾

"There is nothing that does not have its stores with Us, and we only sent it down in a known measure." [al-Ḥijr 15:21]

﴿قَالَ رَبُّنَا ٱلَّذِىٓ أَعْطَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُۥ ثُمَّ هَدَىٰ﴾

"He said, 'Our Lord is He who gives each thing its created form and then guides it'." [Ṭaha 20:50]

When He is describing or analysing, He ﷻ says:

﴿وَأَرْسَلْنَا ٱلرِّيَٰحَ لَوَٰقِحَ فَأَنزَلْنَا مِنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَأَسْقَيْنَٰكُمُوهُ وَمَآ أَنتُمْ لَهُۥ بِخَٰزِنِينَ﴾

"We send forth the pollinating winds and send down water from the sky and give it to you to drink. And it is not you who keep its stores." [al-Ḥijr 15:22]

﴿ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِى رَفَعَ ٱلسَّمَـٰوَٰتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ۖ ثُمَّ ٱسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى ٱلْعَرْشِ ۖ وَسَخَّرَ ٱلشَّمْسَ وَٱلْقَمَرَ ۖ كُلٌّ يَجْرِى لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۚ يُدَبِّرُ ٱلْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ ٱلْـَٔايَـٰتِ لَعَلَّكُم بِلِقَآءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ﴾

"Allah is He who raised up the heavens without any support – you can see that – and then established Himself firmly upon the Throne. He made the sun and moon subservient, each running for a specified term. He directs the whole affair. He makes the signs clear so that perhaps you will be certain about the meeting with your Lord." [ar-Raʿd 13:2]

As for the verses going beyond all of that and delving into the scientific analyses of things, and elucidating how things are assembled and how their constituent parts are put together, you will not find that in Allah the Exalted's Book unless it comes within the context of historical research whose objective is to elucidate events that happened and how they happened.

The pedagogical wisdom behind this is that the intellect is not burdened with having to be certain of scientific realities that are connected to tangible matters based on nothing more than reports from the unseen, without relying on seeing and sensing, or experience and observation.

If He ﷻ had explained to you the meaning of: **"stretched out the earth"**[22] [ar-Raʿd 13:3] or **"He covers over day with night"**[23]

22 ﴿مَدَّ ٱلْأَرْضَ﴾
23 ﴿يُغْشِى ٱلَّيْلَ ٱلنَّهَارَ﴾

[ar-Ra'd 13:3] in an exact, scientific manner, it would have been incumbent upon you to be firmly convinced of that explanation without seeing it, before the means of your research and investigation has disclosed it to you.

Allah ﷻ has ennobled the human intellect – as we mentioned before – and raised it above being required to believe in something without seeing it when there are numerous ways of looking at it and sensing it.

You know that one of the greatest pedagogical mistakes is for your student to have a natural and direct way of experiencing a scientific fact via his own sensory effort, but then you turn him away from it and force him to understand it without it.

It is not for you to say: Why has Allah informed us accurately and meticulously about many unseen matters that we do not see and not sense, such as the angels, the jinn, and their attributes, as well as Paradise and the Fire and what they are like, such that He has required that we believe in all of that according to what He has informed us, without our relying on any of our perceptive faculties or senses?

Yes, it is not for you to say this, because the matters that Allah has informed us of and accurately described for us are inaccessible via the senses; they are not subject to experience and observation.

The only way to have knowledge of them is via definitive reporting, which contains no disparity or falsehood.

If He ﷻ had turned your attention towards researching into angels and pushed you to grasp their reality, investigating and contemplating would not have gotten you anywhere, no matter how long you spent

doing so. This is because your means of perception and observation cannot lead you to any knowledge of them whatsoever, and therefore you have to rely on nothing but accurate reports.

The third aspect:

Relying on discussion and dialogue

The Qur'ān's style in this is brilliant and amazing, for when it discusses and dialogues, it provokes investigation into evidences, it focuses on them, and then it leaves the conclusions exposed within the contents of the speech, without articulating them. It is left to the one who listens and reflects to draw connections and make conclusions!

This is the benefit of having a style of dialogue that is based on questioning and discussing.

The objective is to push the student quickly towards the same required path of knowledge that the teacher or instructor is on.

One of the most hazardous banes of merely presenting and dictating is that the instructor, in the course of his presentation and dictation, moves through stages towards the sought scientific conclusion while the listener remains standing where he was. Or, he falls behind and finds himself in a maze of confusion, not learning or understanding anything.

When discussion and dialogue are based on this objective, if the teacher declares the results and conclusions of his evidences during his discussion, the entire pedagogical benefit of his work is lost.

Perhaps the style of dialogue came to realise another benefit, which is to unveil the stubbornness of certain people, and that they know the truth that they pretend to be ignorant of. Discussion moves these people and makes them reveal what they have hidden within themselves. This objective, likewise, can only be realised by provoking investigation into the evidences and squeezing them out by way of discussion and dialogue, such that the results become apparent without the teacher having to articulate them.

Look at these verses towards the end of Sūrat an-Naml:

﴿قُلِ ٱلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَسَلَٰمٌ عَلَىٰ عِبَادِهِ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱصْطَفَىٰٓ ءَآللَّهُ خَيْرٌ أَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾ أَمَّنْ خَلَقَ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضَ وَأَنزَلَ لَكُم مِّنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَأَنۢبَتْنَا بِهِۦ حَدَآئِقَ ذَاتَ بَهْجَةٍ مَّا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَن تُنۢبِتُوا۟ شَجَرَهَآ ۗ أَءِلَٰهٌ مَّعَ ٱللَّهِ ۚ بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ أَمَّن جَعَلَ ٱلْأَرْضَ قَرَارًا وَجَعَلَ خِلَٰلَهَآ أَنْهَٰرًا وَجَعَلَ لَهَا رَوَٰسِىَ وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَ ٱلْبَحْرَيْنِ حَاجِزًا ۗ أَءِلَٰهٌ مَّعَ ٱللَّهِ ۚ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ أَمَّن يُجِيبُ ٱلْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ ٱلسُّوٓءَ وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَآءَ ٱلْأَرْضِ ۗ أَءِلَٰهٌ مَّعَ ٱللَّهِ ۚ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾ أَمَّن يَهْدِيكُمْ فِى ظُلُمَٰتِ ٱلْبَرِّ وَٱلْبَحْرِ وَمَن يُرْسِلُ ٱلرِّيَٰحَ بُشْرًۢا بَيْنَ يَدَىْ رَحْمَتِهِۦٓ ۗ أَءِلَٰهٌ مَّعَ ٱللَّهِ ۚ تَعَٰلَى ٱللَّهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ أَمَّن يَبْدَؤُا۟ ٱلْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُۥ وَمَن يَرْزُقُكُم مِّنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ ۗ أَءِلَٰهٌ مَّعَ ٱللَّهِ ۚ قُلْ هَاتُوا۟ بُرْهَٰنَكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ صَٰدِقِينَ﴾

"Say: 'Praise be to Allah and peace be upon His slaves whom He has chosen.' Is Allah better, or what you associate with Him? He who created the skies and the earth and sends down water for you from the sky by which We make luxuriant gardens grow – you could never make their trees grow. Is there another god

besides Allah? No indeed, but they are people who equate others with Him! He who made the earth a stable dwelling place and appointed rivers flowing through its midst and placed firmly embedded mountains on it and set a barrier between the two seas; is there another god besides Allah? No indeed, but most of them do not know it! He who responds to the oppressed when they call on Him and removes their distress, and has appointed you as vicegerents on the earth; is there another god besides Allah? How little you pay heed! He who guides you in the darkness of the land and sea and sends out the winds bringing advance news of His mercy; is there another god besides Allah? Exalted is Allah above what they associate with Him! He who originates creation and then regenerates it and provides for you from out of heaven and earth; is there another god besides Allah? Say: 'Bring your proof if you are being truthful.'" [an-Naml 27:59-64]

As you can see, this is a style of dialogue based on provoking questions that stimulate the intellect and encourage thought. You will not find a clear answer to any of the questions. Rather, instead of an answer, attention is drawn to where it is possible for the mind to realise the correct answer and become aware of it.

It asks, and it urges questioning and seeking the answer, but then it very quickly turns away from both questioning and seeking the answer and draws attention to the source of the problem, which is that they have equated others with Allah, and that they do not want to know anything about the realities of the universe and the serious evidences it contains for Allah's existence and oneness. Furthermore, they do not want to remember where they originally come from, and how they were created. If they were to remember, and know, and be just, they would know the answer to all of these questions, and they would agree as submissive believers.

Allah the Exalted says: "**No indeed, but they are people who equate others with Him!**" [an-Naml 27:60] and so forth instead of giving the answer that is expected from them.

Thus, **the excuse** for their silence regarding answering the first question about the Creator of the skies, the earth and the One who sends down rain from the clouds is that they equate others – created beings – with Allah.

The excuse for their silence regarding the question about who made the earth a stable dwelling place and created firmly embedded mountains on it is that they are not even attempting to know anything about the intricacies and secrets of the universe.

The excuse for their silence regarding the question about who responds to the oppressed when they turn to Him, sincerely in submissiveness and supplication, is that they rarely remember moments like these as they go through life, and so on.

This method of dialogue unveils the obstinacy of the idol-worshippers, moves them away from this stubborn position of theirs, and weakens their ability to sow doubt and feign ignorance. They are thus educational material for others if they persist in their disbelief despite what has been unveiled, or this dialogue is educational material for them themselves if they wake up to the evidences for faith and the necessity of being just.

Look at how the Exalted One discusses with the unbelievers in another part:

﴿أَمْ يَقُولُونَ تَقَوَّلَهُۥ ۚ بَل لَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ فَلْيَأْتُوا۟ بِحَدِيثٍ مِّثْلِهِۦٓ إِن كَانُوا۟ صَٰدِقِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾
أَمْ خُلِقُوا۟ مِنْ غَيْرِ شَىْءٍ أَمْ هُمُ ٱلْخَٰلِقُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ أَمْ خَلَقُوا۟ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضَ ۚ بَل لَّا

يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ أَمْ عِندَهُمْ خَزَآئِنُ رَبِّكَ أَمْ هُمُ ٱلْمُصَيْطِرُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾ أَمْ لَهُمْ سُلَّمٌ يَسْتَمِعُونَ فِيهِ ۖ فَلْيَأْتِ مُسْتَمِعُهُم بِسُلْطَٰنٍ مُّبِينٍ﴾

"Or do they say, 'He has simply made it up'? No, the truth is that they do not believe. Let them produce a discourse like it if they are telling the truth. Or were they created out of nothing, or are they the creators? Or did they create the skies and the earth? No, in truth they have no certainty. Or do they possess the treasuries of your Lord or do they have control of them? Or do they have a ladder on which they listen? Then let their listener bring clear evidence." [at-Ṭūr 52:33-38]

In these verses and those that follow, He has turned to the conceivable possibilities behind the obstinacy of the unbelievers, and He responds to each one in a unique way! He did not negate the possibilities with definitive negative expressions, for that kind of negation only increases one's opponent in stubbornness and obstinacy. Instead, He discussed these possibilities in a way that exposes their falseness, and left declaring that falseness to the listener's mind and intellect.

He included a discussion of each possibility and a logical principle that leads the intellect to the truth and distinguishes it from its surrounding. However, He did not base the pillars of the discussion on that principle in its normal legal fashion. Rather, He based it on its spirit and its intellectual flow, which can be understood by all intellects.

The first possibility is that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ made up the Qur'ān and claimed it was from Allah, and therefore it should be easy for them to produce something similar. Thus, let them make up a Qur'ān, claim it is from Allah, and give it similar rhetoric and style. If they do that, it will allow their claim to be true.

The second possibility is that they themselves were created without a creator, and thus came into existence just like that without anything! Raising this possibility in this Qur'ānic style draws attention in a commiserating, mocking way to the claim of something's being preferred to exist without anyone preferring it, which is the most glaring of impossibilities and which all intelligent people agree is inconceivable.

It is simply not possible for something to go from non-existence to existence unless there is some cause that preferred for this to happen. Without this cause, that which is non-existent does not change at all, because the default is for something to remain as it was.

The third possibility is that they – in their own delusion – brought themselves into existence. Raising this possibility, in the way that you see, also draws attention in a mocking way to the claim of infinite regression, which is also one of the glaring impossibilities according to all intelligent people.

Infinite regression means that it relies on itself for its existence, such that it is the cause and the thing caused at the same time! **As you can see, it is patently false.**[24]

Look at how the style of dialogue in the Qur'ān makes the unbelievers refer to the rule that infinite regress is false, that something's being preferred without any preferring it is false, so that their claims fall apart! It does all of that without taking them down an educational path, or dictating to them knowledge of something they did not know, or imposing any conclusion or decision upon them.

24 We know from what we have clarified that infinite regression, or infinite regress, or something's being preferred to exist without anyone's preferring it, is not an invention of Greek philosophy, and to rely on it is not to rely on Greek philosophy and its standards, as some people imagine. Rather, it is an extraction of sound human thought in every time and place, even though it is expressed differently from one nation to another.

Rather, it provokes them to think according to the scales of logic and science, and leaves them there, while before they were clothed in the garbs of ignorance, or feigning ignorance and blindness.

The most prominent thing that it relies on in its discussion is the pivot of logical and intellectual principles, without confining itself to well-known formulations and terminology. This is so that the benefit of knowledge and understanding is not lost on any group of people, regardless of their knowledge or educational level, as long as they resort to their common ability to reflect and their freedom of thought and inquiry.

Then contemplate this other example:

﴿أَفَرَءَيْتُم مَّا تَحْرُثُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ ءَأَنتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُۥٓ أَمْ نَحْنُ ٱلزَّٰرِعُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾ لَوْ نَشَآءُ لَجَعَلْنَٰهُ
حُطَٰمًا فَظَلْتُمْ تَفَكَّهُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ إِنَّا لَمُغْرَمُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾ بَلْ نَحْنُ مَحْرُومُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ أَفَرَءَيْتُمُ ٱلْمَآءَ
ٱلَّذِى تَشْرَبُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾ ءَأَنتُمْ أَنزَلْتُمُوهُ مِنَ ٱلْمُزْنِ أَمْ نَحْنُ ٱلْمُنزِلُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ لَوْ نَشَآءُ جَعَلْنَٰهُ
أُجَاجًا فَلَوْلَا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ أَفَرَءَيْتُمُ ٱلنَّارَ ٱلَّتِى تُورُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ ءَأَنتُمْ أَنشَأْتُمْ شَجَرَتَهَآ أَمْ
نَحْنُ ٱلْمُنشِـُٔونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ نَحْنُ جَعَلْنَٰهَا تَذْكِرَةً وَمَتَٰعًا لِّلْمُقْوِينَ﴾

"Have you thought about what you cultivate? It is you who make it germinate or are We the germinator? If we wished, We could have made it broken stubble. You would then be left devoid of crops, distraught: 'We are ruined. In fact, we are destitute!' Have you thought about the water that you drink? Is it you who sent it down from the clouds, or are We the sender? If We wished, we could have made it bitter, so will you not give thanks? "Have you thought about the fire that you light? Is it you who make the trees that fuel it grow or are We the grower? We have made it to be a reminder and a comfort for *muqwīn*." [al-Wāqiʿah 56:63-73]

It is another discussion that aims to lead the listeners to certainty in Allah's existence and His oneness, via a way that draws attention and makes people think about some of the phenomena of the universe.

So what is the way that will lead them to this certainty?

It is a way of unveiling via the fact that all of these created things are based on the foundation of "**ultimate cause**", i.e. on the pivot of in harmony with keeping with man's nature and his needs, and, therefore, it is possible to explain the existence of any of these created things as being coincidental.

However, in elucidating this fact, the Qur'ānic discussion does not rely on any scientific formulation or terminology that we use today. Rather, it leads the intellect to it via simple dialogue that provokes thought to the same extent that scientific formulations and terminology would. This thinking does not need any of the aforementioned scientific foundations, terms, or principles; one's sincere, contemplating natural disposition has no need of that.

It draws attention to the crops that make the face of the earth verdant, and does not take long to give man the most important means of life that he needs to nourish himself. **Then it asks**: did you, O man, extract these crops from inside the earth in some way that you might think is simply of nature and its necessities? If We had wanted, We could have forced this nature to transform these crops of yours into broken chaff. How preposterous would it be for nature to comprehend, at that time, an intention, or to have an end in mind such that it would confine itself to what sustains your life and keeps your affairs in order!

Then it draws attention to water, which is the foundation of human life, and asks the stubborn deniers:

Did you squeeze it out of the clouds? Did you subjugate the accumulated vapour between the surface of the seas and the atmosphere to the law of rain? That is another inevitable necessity of nature, and no one has any precedence therein.

If We had wanted, We could have made it extremely bitter, or extremely saline, such that it would burn the mouth of whoever drank it and the earth that it fell on. Then you would not benefit from it by growing crops or by drinking it. Furthermore, you would have no control over the nature of the sea and vapour nor over the laws of humidity and rain, such that you could change anything that We had willed.

It then draws attention to the element of fire and the amazing trees from which a *zinād*[25] is made, which are the *markh*[26] and the *ʿifār*.[27] It asks: are you the one who made an agreement with nature to produce these trees and place this element within it?

If the matter had been left to nature, fire would have unknown consequences that would not be harmonious with or suitable to your way of life. You would also not be able to do anything to make it harmonious or subjugate it.

However, do you not see that we have made it a comfort for you in this life, no matter what state you are in or how developed your means are? We have also made it a means of your provision, from your most primitive state through to your most complex!

As you can see, the discussion is based on drawing attention to the fact that it is not inevitable that the phenomena of the universe around us would be the way they are now, and that they would correspond with any of our needs or circumstances. It is also not for nature, or anything else, to stand in the face of that possibility.

25 (tn): i.e. a primitive device for kindling fire.
26 (tn): i.e. leptadenia pyrotechnica.
27 (tn): i.e. buddleja polystachya.

Instead, a sublime planner willed for those phenomena to be as they are so that they would be in harmony with the start of life and development, and be in keeping with all of the means upon which Allah has established the edifice of this universe.

The meaning, which is easily affirmed by this type of dialogue – as you have seen – and can be understood by anyone who is intelligent and reflects, is the same meaning that scholars of theology and philosophy have spoken of at length using specific, scientific terminology, such as "ultimate cause" or describing the universe as being a system of wisdom and planning.

Thus, over there, it is a meaning that is inaccessible and almost no one can understand it apart from those who are knowledgeable in that field, but over here it is an accessible, clear meaning, with no understanding or comprehension standing in its way, and this is solely because it has become easy and clear in this form, thanks to the style of dialogue in which it is being expressed.

To talk about the applications of this pedagogical style, as it is presented in the Qur'ān, would take a long time, and it would be an interesting and exciting discussion, but there is no scope to go into detailed treatment here.

However, I am drawing the attention of those who are concerned with education and its schools of thought towards this aspect, and I call on them to study it attentively and in detail, for they will find modern and beneficial pedagogical methods that they are in the greatest need of knowing and having insight into.

STORIES AND HISTORY

Stories and historical research have a massive importance in education.

However, it is not about quoting a story as it is. Rather, it is about knowing the pedagogical method upon which the fabric of the story must be based.

The Qur'ān's approach regarding stories

The Qur'ān has a precise approach that can be summarised as follows:

First, the Qur'ān does not present a story unless it is connected to the purpose for which the story has been presented:

This is so that the connection between the story and the occasion that calls for its mention remains clear, such that the story evokes its importance and gives it movement and life.

This is why you almost never find the Qur'ān narrating the events of a story in a historical fashion, following the chronological order of events, as that would, by its very nature, take the reader away from the occasion and original purpose for which the story is being mentioned.

For example, read the story of the Companions of the Cave. The Exalted One says:

﴿نَّحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ نَبَأَهُم بِٱلْحَقِّ إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ ءَامَنُوا۟ بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدْنَٰهُمْ هُدًى ﴿١٣﴾ وَرَبَطْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ إِذْ قَامُوا۟ فَقَالُوا۟ رَبُّنَا رَبُّ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ لَن نَّدْعُوَا۟ مِن دُونِهِۦٓ إِلَٰهًا لَّقَدْ قُلْنَآ إِذًا شَطَطًا﴾

"We will relate their story to you with truth. They were young men who believed in their Lord and We increased them in guidance. We fortified their hearts and when they stood up and said, 'Our Lord is the Lord of the skies and the earth and we will not call on any god apart from Him.'" [al-Kahf 18:13-14]

You can see that it starts by describing the Companions of the Cave as being young men who had withdrawn from their disbelieving peoples, for they believed in Allah alone and because of that, they had resolved to isolate themselves in lofty mountains and inside caves.

So who are these people? Where did they live? How many of them were there? What were their names?

A historical narrative would require that all these questions be answered.

If, however, the story had followed this manner, the objective behind the story would not have been met, because the reader's mind

would have been drawn towards following interesting historical events and wanting to know more about them, and thus lose sight of the lesson and moral for which the story had been presented.

This is the secret behind the brevity that you find in most of the stories of the Qur'ān.

And it is a secret that man can become aware of by way of his desire for the Qur'ānic story to be replete with more information, for he would not desire that were it not for the motive of loving to investigate and think a great deal, which is what man is normally described as.

If his desire were to be answered, his mind would slip away from the reason why the Qur'ān put it there, which is adherence to the plan of guidance and the subject matter that is connected to it.

This does not mean, however, that the Qur'ān therefore suffers from artistic gaps or improper brevity. Rather, the Qur'ānic story is complete in terms of its artistic elements, and it is based on a brilliant literary style that is untouched by any flaw or defect.

In fact, the literary aspect of the Qur'ānic story is considered one of the most prominent expressions of inimitability in Allah's ﷻ Book.[28]

For a story to be artistic and coherent, it does not have to be elaborate and pompous in its presentation of events. Rather, the ruling therein is that it follows the objective behind why it was presented. If the objective is to learn a lesson, the pedagogical necessity requires that the discussion focus on that. If the discussion branches off into other aspects, it is considered a violation of the fundamental purpose behind the story.

28 You can see an analysis of this in what Sayyid Qutb, may Allah have mercy on him, wrote in his book *At-Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī al-Qur'ān*; he analysed the artistic peculiarities of the Qur'ān thoroughly and in way that no one had done before.

Second, including pieces of advice and lessons in the story:

The goal of the pedagogical approach behind this is so that the reader does not become absorbed in the story and focus all of his attention on it, and thus lose sight of the original purpose of the story.

That right there is the bane of using stories in education and instruction, because it is the nature of a story to move the reader or listener gradually away from the purpose for which it was started or the end that it is seeking, because the mind becomes preoccupied with its events and surprises, and maybe some interesting scenes.

When the educator is able to overcome this bane, and thus rely therein on an intelligent style that does not lead the listener, through its different stages, away from the pedagogical pivot that it started from, the story is then the most beneficial pedagogical means. **That is the way of the Qur'ān.**

In Sūrat Ṭaha, Allah tells us the story of Mūsā and Fir'awn and He does so in such a way that when the events of the story branch out, and the reader is about to lose sight of the objective and purpose behind the story, by reflecting on its amazing facts and happenings, the reader is then surprised – in a way that is profoundly wise and brilliant – with a new discussion that is aimed at the listener and which gives him admonition and guidance, and draws him back to the overall purpose behind the story.

Then, when this sudden discussion has fulfilled its purpose regarding the listener, the context moves back to the story and its events.

Contemplate all of this when Allah the Exalted tells us the story of Mūsā and Fir'awn:

﴿قَالَ فَمَن رَّبُّكُمَا يَٰمُوسَىٰ ﴿٤٩﴾ قَالَ رَبُّنَا ٱلَّذِىٓ أَعۡطَىٰ كُلَّ شَىۡءٍ خَلۡقَهُۥ ثُمَّ هَدَىٰ ﴿٥٠﴾ قَالَ فَمَا بَالُ ٱلۡقُرُونِ ٱلۡأُولَىٰ ﴿٥١﴾ قَالَ عِلۡمُهَا عِندَ رَبِّى فِى كِتَٰبٍ لَّا يَضِلُّ رَبِّى وَلَا يَنسَى ﴿٥٢﴾ ٱلَّذِى جَعَلَ لَكُمُ ٱلۡأَرۡضَ مَهۡدًا وَسَلَكَ لَكُمۡ فِيهَا سُبُلًا وَأَنزَلَ مِنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَأَخۡرَجۡنَا بِهِۦٓ أَزۡوَٰجًا مِّن نَّبَاتٍ شَتَّىٰ ﴿٥٣﴾ كُلُواْ وَٱرۡعَوۡاْ أَنۡعَٰمَكُمۡ إِنَّ فِى ذَٰلِكَ لَأٓيَٰتٍ لِّأُوْلِى ٱلنُّهَىٰ ﴿٥٤﴾ مِنۡهَا خَلَقۡنَٰكُمۡ وَفِيهَا نُعِيدُكُمۡ وَمِنۡهَا نُخۡرِجُكُمۡ تَارَةً أُخۡرَىٰ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَلَقَدۡ أَرَيۡنَٰهُ ءَايَٰتِنَا كُلَّهَا فَكَذَّبَ وَأَبَىٰ﴾

"Fir'awn said, 'Who, then, is your Lord, Mūsā?' He said, 'Our Lord is He who gives each thing its created form and then guides it.' He said, 'What about the previous generations?' He said, 'Knowledge of them is with my Lord in a Book. My Lord does not misplace nor does He forget.' It is He who made the earth a cradle for you and threaded pathways for you through it and sent down water from the sky by which We have brought forth various different types of plants. Eat and pasture your cattle. Certainly there are signs in that for people of sound intellect. From it We created you, to it We will return you, and from it We will bring you forth a second time. We showed him all of Our signs, but he denied and spurned them." [Ṭaha 20:49-56]

Look at how the course of the story comes to a halt in order to introduce – very wisely and cleverly – another discussion, moving away from the conversation between Mūsā and Fir'awn to a conversation between Allah and His slaves. This other discussion includes the bestowing of blessings, warning about punishments, drawing attention to the profundity of Allah's authority and the sublimity of His might, such that the story comes to be dyed with this guidance, and thereby the reader or listener recalls the overall purpose for which the Qur'ān

was revealed, and the story goes back to its course, starting with His ﷻ words: **"We showed him all of Our signs, but he denied and spurned them."** [Ṭaha 20:56]

You can also contemplate this pedagogical approach in how the story of the Companions of the Cave is presented. Look at how the inimitable pedagogical style seizes the first opportunity to insert a fleeting admonition and reminder that wakes the soul up from its stupor, and then it gives this warning in a brilliant and profound way. Then, almost immediately, this discussion is connected to the story and its events once again.

Allah ﷻ says:

﴿سَيَقُولُونَ ثَلَٰثَةٌ رَّابِعُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ خَمْسَةٌ سَادِسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ رَجْمًۢا بِٱلْغَيْبِ ۖ وَيَقُولُونَ سَبْعَةٌ وَثَامِنُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ ۚ قُل رَّبِّىٓ أَعْلَمُ بِعِدَّتِهِم مَّا يَعْلَمُهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ ۬ فَلَا تُمَارِ فِيهِمْ إِلَّا مِرَآءً ظَٰهِرًا وَلَا تَسْتَفْتِ فِيهِم مِّنْهُمْ أَحَدًا ﴿٢٢﴾ وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَاْىْءٍ إِنِّى فَاعِلٌ ذَٰلِكَ غَدًا ﴿٢٣﴾ إِلَّآ أَن يَشَآءَ ٱللَّهُ ۚ وَٱذْكُر رَّبَّكَ إِذَا نَسِيتَ وَقُلْ عَسَىٰٓ أَن يَهْدِيَنِ رَبِّى لِأَقْرَبَ مِنْ هَٰذَا رَشَدًا ﴿٢٤﴾ وَلَبِثُوا۟ فِى كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلَٰثَ مِاْئَةٍ سِنِينَ وَٱزْدَادُوا۟ تِسْعًا﴾

"They will say, 'There were three of them, their dog being the fourth.' They will say, 'There were five of them, their dog being the sixth', guessing at the Unseen. And they will say, 'There were seven of them, their dog being the eighth.' Say: 'My Lord knows best their number. Those who know about them are very few.' So do not enter into any argument concerning them, except in relation to what is clearly known. And do not seek the opinion of any of them regarding them. Never say about anything: 'I will do that tomorrow' without adding 'if Allah wills'. Remember your

Lord when you forget and say: 'Perhaps my Lord will guide me to something closer to right guidance than this.' They stayed in their cave for three hundred years and added nine." [al-Kahf 18:22-25]

In Sūrat Yūsuf, you can read the story of Yūsuf and his brothers and the ruler of Egypt, and it is a long story. It was presented in order to confirm that the Qur'ān is Allah's Speech and that Muḥammad ﷺ has no say in it whatsoever. Thus, you find it overflowing with parenthetical clauses that alert the reader to the lesson and admonition every time that the story, with its events and exciting scenes, might distract the reader and make him heedless of it.

For example, look at His ﷻ words here:

﴿يَٰصَٰحِبَيِ ٱلسِّجۡنِ ءَأَرۡبَابٞ مُّتَفَرِّقُونَ خَيۡرٌ أَمِ ٱللَّهُ ٱلۡوَٰحِدُ ٱلۡقَهَّارُ ۝٣٩ مَا تَعۡبُدُونَ مِن دُونِهِۦٓ إِلَّآ أَسۡمَآءٗ سَمَّيۡتُمُوهَآ أَنتُمۡ وَءَابَآؤُكُم مَّآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ بِهَا مِن سُلۡطَٰنٍۚ إِنِ ٱلۡحُكۡمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِۚ أَمَرَ أَلَّا تَعۡبُدُوٓاْ إِلَّآ إِيَّاهُۚ ذَٰلِكَ ٱلدِّينُ ٱلۡقَيِّمُ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكۡثَرَ ٱلنَّاسِ لَا يَعۡلَمُونَ ۝٤٠ يَٰصَٰحِبَيِ ٱلسِّجۡنِ أَمَّآ أَحَدُكُمَا فَيَسۡقِي رَبَّهُۥ خَمۡرٗا﴾

"My fellow prisoners, are many lords better, or Allah, the only One, the Conqueror? What you serve apart from Him are only names that you and your forefathers have made up. There is no mandate for them from Allah. Allah alone is qualified to judge. His order is to worship none but Him. That is, in truth, the straight and upright Religion, but most of mankind simply do not know. My fellow prisoners, one of you will serve his lord with wine..." [Yūsuf 12:39-41]

And look at His ﷻ words:

﴿قَالَ ٱجۡعَلۡنِي عَلَىٰ خَزَآئِنِ ٱلۡأَرۡضِۖ إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلِيمٞ ٥٥ وَكَذَٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِ يَتَبَوَّأُ مِنۡهَا حَيۡثُ يَشَآءُۚ نُصِيبُ بِرَحۡمَتِنَا مَن نَّشَآءُۖ وَلَا نُضِيعُ أَجۡرَ ٱلۡمُحۡسِنِينَ ٥٦ وَلَأَجۡرُ ٱلۡأٓخِرَةِ خَيۡرٞ لِّلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَكَانُواْ يَتَّقُونَ ٥٧ وَجَآءَ إِخۡوَةُ يُوسُفَ فَدَخَلُواْ عَلَيۡهِ فَعَرَفَهُمۡ وَهُمۡ لَهُۥ مُنكِرُونَ﴾

"He said, 'Entrust the country's stores to me. In truth, I am a knowing guardian.' And thus we established Yūsuf in the land so he could live in any place he pleased. We grant Our grace to anyone We will and We do not allow to go to waste the wage of any people who do good. But the wages of the Hereafter are the best for people who believe and fear their Lord. The brothers of Yūsuf came into his presence and he knew them but they did not know him." [Yūsuf 12:55-58]

The story is dyed with a spirit of admonition and lesson, and it is embellished with instructional clauses and expressions that the story-teller directs to the listeners or readers without interfering with the formulation of the story; there is no disorder, disruption, or weakening of its artistic structure. This is considered the peak of successful pedagogical work, the perfected, accurate manifestation of which you will only find in Allah's ﷻ Book.

Think of how many stories there are that are supposed to be pedagogical or instructional, and they are spread amongst people for the sake of awareness and education, but they lead people to the opposite of the said objective. This is because the events of the story overwhelm the lessons and the instructions, and thus the readers seize the images and events that they find entertaining and become heedless of the underlying lessons and objectives.

Furthermore, this pedagogical phenomenon is not confined to just stories. Rather, it flows uninterrupted throughout the subjects that the Qur'ān deals with. The reader is never left to become fully absorbed in any subject that he is researching, whether it is a legal ruling, a creedal point, information about unseen matters, or an illustration of the events on the Day of Standing.

Rather, all of these matters are dyed with the same dye of guidance and instruction, and the fundamental pivot – for which the Qur'ān was revealed – is made prominent and dominant and it is constantly drawing attention throughout all the subjects and discussions. This is so that the mind does not become distracted from this pivot regardless of how subdivided it may come following those subjects and ideas.

Look at what He ﷻ says when He affirms for us the rulings of fasting:

﴿فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنكُمُ ٱلشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۖ وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ يُرِيدُ ٱللَّهُ بِكُمُ ٱلْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ ٱلْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا۟ ٱلْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَىٰكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٨٥﴾ وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِى عَنِّى فَإِنِّى قَرِيبٌ ۖ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ ٱلدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ ۖ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا۟ لِى وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا۟ بِى لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ ﴿١٨٦﴾ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ ٱلصِّيَامِ ٱلرَّفَثُ إِلَىٰ نِسَآئِكُمْ﴾

"Any of you who are resident for the month should fast it. But any of you who are ill or on a journey should fast a number of other days. Allah desires ease for you; He does not desire

difficulty for you. You should complete the number of days and proclaim Allah's greatness for the guidance He has given you so that perhaps you will be thankful. If My slaves ask you about Me, I am near. I answer the call of the caller when he calls on Me. They should therefore respond to Me and believe in Me so that perhaps they will be rightly guided. On the night of the fast it is lawful for you to have sexual relations with your wives."
[al-Baqarah 2:185-187]

You can see how Allah inserts this verse between the verses on fasting and its rulings, and this draws peoples' ears towards the essence of slavehood to Allah and the overall foundation from which these many, constituent rulings branch out.

In Sūrat an-Nisā', you can read the rulings that are connected to bequests, inheritance, marriage and so forth, and you will find verses of admonition and guidance interspersing all of these rulings. Indeed, the style is one of tactful guidance, not one of dry knowledge.

What is truly amazing is that you find some educated researchers, and they have strayed away from this pedagogical approach that should never be absent from the mind of anyone who has the least concern in matters of education and instruction, criticising the Qur'ān for the greatest pedagogical aspect that it contains. They ask: why are the subjects and discussions in the Qur'ān interposed and not organised into chapters and sections like all other books and writings?

What educational or instructional effect would remain of what we are talking about if the Qur'ān were arranged as they wish, with a chapter on creed and its evidence, a chapter on rulings and transactions, and a chapter on stories and history, and so forth?

The one who opens the Qur'ān – therefore – to look up a ruling and nothing else forgets the Qur'ān and its objectives, and only

focuses on the dry legal matters that he is trying to understand and grasp. This is very similar to the jurists[29] who study the chapter on putting up collateral[30] together and almost none of them remembers Allah or remembers the purpose behind this fiqh and its rulings. Maybe these jurists – at that moment – are further removed from Allah than the ignorant person who remembers Allah unencumbered in his store or shop.

Likewise, the one who turns to the Qur'ān in order to read stories and about history and nothing else, this person, too, forgets the Qur'ān, forgets himself, and forgets his responsibilities within the vast ocean of amazing events that he is reading and listening to, and which he pictures in his head and amuses himself by learning more about them.

The stories, rulings, doctrines, and all other discussions found in the Qur'ān were only revealed for one, overall reason, which is that people voluntarily and willingly become Allah's slaves, just as He created them as slaves forcibly and without their having a say in the matter. This overall matter can only be realised through some type of interblending and interposing in its subjects and topics such that they are all governed by a spirit of instruction and guidance.

If you were to contemplate, you would know that the bane of the various intellectual sciences and disciplines that students receive in their schools is that they are presented to them within a methodology that does not allow for them to ascend to any degree of education and refinement, despite the prime objective being the process of cultivating the mind is education, as they say.

The only way to treat this bane is to review the way these various academic sciences are written down and compiled, and to formulate

29 Ar. *fuqahā'*.
30 Ar. *ar-rahn*.

them based on the foundation of the Qur'ānic approach that we have alluded to. In other words, the vein of instruction and the spirit of moral upbringing should be flowing through all of them.

That is how the scattered fragments of these various sciences can be organised into a common denominator of pedagogical foundations that are the pivot of the process of cultivating the mind.

EMOTIONAL STIMULATION

It is known that emotional stimulation is not a sound pedagogical practice, unless the intention is to make the soul submit to true scientific realities or sound moral principles.

Emotional stimulation, therefore, is a pedagogical means towards a pedagogical or scientific end. It is not a pedagogical objective in and of itself.

These means do have physical hazards if it is misused, just as they have immense benefits if they are used properly.

The pedagogical approach of the Qur'ān regarding using this means can be summarised by observing the following:

First of all, it is not an alternative to the exercise of the intellect and its judgment. Rather, it assists the intellect in its exercise and activity, and then it assists it in submitting the soul to its judgment.

Second, the means of emotional stimulation must rely on illustration and imagination as much as possible, not on ratio-

nal deliberation or a logical framework. The efficacy of emotion always fades in the deluge of intellectual contemplation and rational deliberation.

Third, the educator must rely on a commensurate mixture of effective, emotional elements, instead of only focusing on one of them.

These three matters, upon which the Qur'ān bases the art of emotional stimulation, are the greatest guarantee that the sound pedagogical way will remain safe from the harmful consequences that emotional stimulation usually causes.

In its pedagogical approach, look at how the Qur'ān observes all three of these matters, and how the emotional means stay within these important conditions:

First: emotional stimulation is not a pedagogical end in and of itself. Rather, as we have said, it is to help the intellect control the soul and make it adhere to its judgments.

This is because the call of the Qur'ān, fundamentally and essentially, is aimed at the intellect and mind, as it is connected to principles and realities that cannot be arrived at or adhered to other than by ways of the intellect and mind, such as faith in Allah's existence and oneness and faith that it is not rational for this worldly life to be frivolous while on the brink of ending and vanishing.

You have seen how the Qur'ān does that by means of rational discussion that includes the most precise rules of logic within the scope of investigation and research, even though it is presented devoid of scientific formulations and terminology.

This is why it stimulates the intellect first, towards knowledge of these realities, using various scientific and rational evidences. And it stimulates intelligent people to use their minds and intellects with absolute freedom.

However, after that, it stimulates the latent depths of emotion within the soul, in order to remove any obstacles that may be preventing the intellect from reaching it. It thus stimulates therein the exigencies of fear and desire and the causes of love, and it does so in perfect harmony, which we shall explain shortly, if Allah so wills. Then, after that, the soul is submissive to those principles that the Qur'ān has laid bare and made clear before the intellect.

Contemplate this sublime Qur'ānic passage; look at how it starts by stimulating the intellect and waking it up to the truth by purely scientific and intellectual means. Then look at how it stimulates the latent depths of fear and warning in the soul, so that it does not rebel against the judgment and decision of the intellect, in which there is no doubt:

﴿فَلْيَنظُرِ ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ إِلَىٰ طَعَامِهِۦٓ ﴿٢٤﴾ أَنَّا صَبَبْنَا ٱلْمَآءَ صَبًّا ﴿٢٥﴾ ثُمَّ شَقَقْنَا ٱلْأَرْضَ شَقًّا ﴿٢٦﴾ فَأَنۢبَتْنَا فِيهَا حَبًّا ﴿٢٧﴾ وَعِنَبًا وَقَضْبًا ﴿٢٨﴾ وَزَيْتُونًا وَنَخْلًا ﴿٢٩﴾ وَحَدَآئِقَ غُلْبًا ﴿٣٠﴾ وَفَٰكِهَةً وَأَبًّا ﴿٣١﴾ مَّتَٰعًا لَّكُمْ وَلِأَنْعَٰمِكُمْ ﴿٣٢﴾ فَإِذَا جَآءَتِ ٱلصَّآخَّةُ ﴿٣٣﴾ يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ ٱلْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَأُمِّهِۦ وَأَبِيهِ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَصَٰحِبَتِهِۦ وَبَنِيهِ ﴿٣٦﴾ لِكُلِّ ٱمْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ شَأْنٌ يُغْنِيهِ ﴿٣٧﴾ وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُّسْفِرَةٌ ﴿٣٨﴾ ضَاحِكَةٌ مُّسْتَبْشِرَةٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَوُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَلَيْهَا غَبَرَةٌ ﴿٤٠﴾ تَرْهَقُهَا قَتَرَةٌ ﴿٤١﴾ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْكَفَرَةُ ٱلْفَجَرَةُ﴾

"Man only has to look at his food. We pour down plentiful water, then split the earth into furrows. Then We make grain grow in it, and grapes and herbs, and olives and dates, and lux-

uriant gardens, and orchards and meadows, for you and your livestock to enjoy. When the Deafening Blast comes, the Day a man will flee from his brother, and his mother and his father, and his wife and his children: on that Day every man among them will have concerns enough of his own. That Day some faces will be radiant, laughing, rejoicing. That Day, some faces will be dust-covered, overcast with gloom. Those are the dissolute unbelievers." [ʿAbasa 80:24-42]

The first half of the passage awakens the intellect to the evidence for the Creator's ﷻ existence, and pushes it to have faith in Him. The second half stimulates the soul via the latent depths of desire and fear, so that it cooperates with the intellect's understanding and judgment and thus does not separate from it or rebel against it.

In Sūrat an-Nisāʾ, there are rulings of the Revealed Law that are connected to orphans, bequests, marriage, and inheritance, and they are intellectual discussions based on benefit and rational planning. However, Allah ﷻ starts by stimulating the emotions of the soul in order to make it ready to receive these rulings and submit to what the intellect requires therein. Allah ﷻ says:

﴿يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ ٱتَّقُوا۟ رَبَّكُمُ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَٰحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَآءً ۚ وَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ ٱلَّذِى تَسَآءَلُونَ بِهِۦ وَٱلْأَرْحَامَ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا ۝١ وَءَاتُوا۟ ٱلْيَتَـٰمَىٰٓ أَمْوَٰلَهُمْ ۖ وَلَا تَتَبَدَّلُوا۟ ٱلْخَبِيثَ بِٱلطَّيِّبِ ۖ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوٓا۟ أَمْوَٰلَهُمْ إِلَىٰٓ أَمْوَٰلِكُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ حُوبًا كَبِيرًا﴾

"O mankind! Have taqwā of your Lord, who created you from a single soul and created its mate from it, and then disseminated many men and women from the two of them. Have taqwā of Allah, in whose Name you make demands of one another and also

in respect of your families. Allah watches over you continually. Give orphans their property, and do not substitute bad things for good. Do not assimilate their property into your own. Doing that is a serious crime." [an-Nisā' 4:1-2]

Do you not see how it starts by moving the emotions of the listener or reader towards the rest of his brothers in humanity, and stimulates within him feelings of mercy and compassion towards them? It reminds him of the womb that joins between every individual human being, and stimulates within him motives to preserve it and sanctify it. It draws his attention to the necessity of warning about Allah the Exalted's punishment if he neglects it or falls short in its regard, such that when these emotions are aroused in the soul, and it has become prepared to accept the commands and admonitions regarding people's taking care of each other and their appreciating their close familial ties. It starts and then says: **Give orphans their property, and do not substitute bad things for good."** [an-Nisā' 4:2]

The entire system of the Qur'ān flows in this way: it begins with emotional stimulation and arousal in order to pave the way for rational deliberation, or it follows a scientific and rational discussion with an emotional conclusion that warns the soul about the consequences of not submitting to the intellect.

For this angle, you can understand how dangerous it is when education relies on emotions and feelings as an end in and of itself and not a means towards something else. In other words, there is no intellectual content for the mind to rely on, believe in, and be reassured of.

In that situation, the soul can only ruminate and interact with empty emotional stimulations. It does not find anything to consume or anything that is worthy of being consumed, i.e. something of substance,

other than the efficacy and movement of the intellect. Thus, it is not long before the efficacy and power of the intellect become paralysed under the weight of this emotional agitation that has no basis.

This dangerous practice is ideal for those who want to make others submit when they do not have anything truly scientific or rational to back up what they are saying. Emotional embellishments and imaginations alone guarantee – if the situation necessitates it – that a man and his intellect be a servile victim under their influence and authority.

Second: it is possible from a theoretical standpoint to stimulate emotional elements in the soul in one of two ways:

The first way is to use the intellect itself in order to awaken the soul to the latent depths of its emotions and feelings, in the hope that those emotions and feelings will influence it and lead it to where one wants it to go.

For example, you can approach a wealthy person and try to evoke his compassion towards a poor person who lives next to him. That will then stimulate his intellect and thinking into realising that one of the greatest manifestations of social injustice is this huge disparity in material wealth between two neighbours, and that some of its dangerous consequences for society are such-and-such. Furthermore, there is absolutely no justification for his neighbour to go hungry unless there is some crime that he has committed, while he lives with a bloated, full belly, even though he has no distinction over him.

By speaking in this way, you can wake up his intellect in a purely logical manner to the evil of the situation that he is in, with the in-

tention of convincing his intellect by doing so. That will stimulate inclinations of mercy within him, and make him be charitable towards his neighbour and have a sense of justice and compassion towards him.

This way, however, is not laudable!

Emotions are not stimulated by way of the intellect, but rather via the portals of sense that leads to the soul.

The painful sight of a poor person looking around out of intense hunger has a greater effect on the soul and in stirring up emotion than the ideas of reformers or the logic of philosophers, whoever they may be.

If rational thoughts had authority over emotions and feelings, the poor people who seek mercy and compassion from others by displaying their weakness and indigence would instead prefer to hang a board around their necks that describes the upside-down social situation, and present cogent arguments showing that it is obligatory to look at the state of these wretched people!

The second way is to use the tool of illustration and description, and to place an image in front of the imagination – if it is not possible to place it in front of the seeing eye – without using any rational or logical means.

This way is the laudable way whenever the educator needs to use an emotional element to achieve some pedagogical goal, **and this is the method that the Qur'ān follows!**

The Qur'ān does not address the intellect unless it wants to draw its attention to a purely scientific or intellectual fact. When it wants to stimulate some hidden emotion in the soul, it resorts to the way of de-

scription and illustration, and places in front of the reader or listener's imagination the most accurate reflection that can present the desired image with absolute clarity.

In order to present this image to the soul, the Qur'ān might express it in only one word. Or, it will place it within an elucidation that is composed of some verses according to what the situation requires, or according to the nature and context of what is being said.

Look at these verses from Sūrat al-Isrā':

﴿وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوٓاْ إِلَّآ إِيَّاهُ وَبِٱلْوَٰلِدَيْنِ إِحْسَٰنًا ۚ إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِندَكَ ٱلْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَآ أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُل لَّهُمَآ أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُل لَّهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا﴾

"Your Lord has decreed that you should worship none but Him, and you should show kindness to your parents. Whether one or both of them reach old age with you, do not say 'Uff!' to them out of irritation and do not be harsh with them, but speak to them with gentleness and generosity." [al-Isrā' 17:23]

They address man's intellect, and command him not to worship anyone besides Allah ﷻ, to be good to his parents, and not to offend them in word or in deed. In order for the soul to submit to the implementation of these commands, however, they need emotional stimulation. This will subjugate it to Allah's ﷻ command and the intellect will be convinced. **So, where is the emotional stimulation in the verse? How does it come about?**

It is His ﷻ word: **"...with you..."**[31]

If this word were removed from the verse, one of the greatest influencing factors would be missing. It is only one word but it is

31 (tn): i.e. ﴿عِندَكَ﴾

overflowing with massive amounts of emotional stimulation, because it illustrates for the addressee that state of his parents when they have reached the utmost weakness and old age, such that both of them are living under his wing and in the shade of his affection and care, after he had been the one who was living under their wing and in the shade of their affection and care!

Look at how it stimulates compassion and mercy in the child's soul with this one, illustrative word, without using any rational direction or instruction or mental reminder.

If the direct, illustrative word were replaced with an expression of reminding or drawing attention and the like, it would have placed a barrier in the mind that would have prevented the soul from conceiving of this stimulative, painful image. Therefore, this moral instruction would not have the desired positive effect on the soul.

We can see the exact same thing in His ﷻ words:

﴿يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ كُتِبَ عَلَيۡكُمُ ٱلۡقِصَاصُ فِي ٱلۡقَتۡلَىۖ ٱلۡحُرُّ بِٱلۡحُرِّ وَٱلۡعَبۡدُ بِٱلۡعَبۡدِ وَٱلۡأُنثَىٰ بِٱلۡأُنثَىٰۚ فَمَنۡ عُفِيَ لَهُۥ مِنۡ أَخِيهِ شَيۡءٞ فَٱتِّبَاعُۢ بِٱلۡمَعۡرُوفِ وَأَدَآءٌ إِلَيۡهِ بِإِحۡسَٰنٖۗ ذَٰلِكَ تَخۡفِيفٞ مِّن رَّبِّكُمۡ وَرَحۡمَةٞ﴾

"You who believe! Retaliation is prescribed for you in the case of people killed: free man for free man, slave for slave, female for female. But if someone is absolved by his brother, blood-money should be claimed with correctness and paid with good will. That is an easement and a mercy from your Lord." [al-Baqarah 2:178]

As you can see, the verse affirms a ruling in the Revealed Law, which is retaliation[32] or blood money[33] regarding the killer, just as it affirms that absolving from retaliation necessitates that the killer promptly carry out the alternative, which is to pay the blood money in full or in part – if the victim's guardian pardons some of it.

This verse, however, which affirms this rational, legal ruling, stimulates feelings of human brotherhood in the victim's guardian towards the killer, to push him towards forgoing some of his rights.

How is this emotional stimulation brought about?

It is also just one word: "**...his brother...**"[34]

Look at the nature of this word and where it falls in the verse!

It merely reminds the victim's guardian without commanding him or instructing him to do anything...one word that attempts via direct, emotional illustration to remind the one who has the power to retaliate that he is a close brother to the killer, and to make him forget that he is the victim's guardian. What a difference there is between the two descriptions, in terms of illustration and suggestion. The first suggests mercy and pardon, while the second suggests to him that he has the right to satisfy his desire for revenge.

If this direct, illustrative word were replaced with another instructional sentence addressed to the mind and intellect, it would be of no benefit. It would not benefit the intellect at all, even if it were convinced by it, because it is the soul that is burning with revenge and ready to pounce, not the intellect or mind alone.

32 Ar. *al-qiṣāṣ*.
33 Ar. *ad-diyah*.
34 (tn): i.e. ﴿أَخِيهِ﴾

Look at these other words of His ﷻ:

﴿وَإِذَا حَضَرَ ٱلْقِسْمَةَ أُوْلُواْ ٱلْقُرْبَىٰ وَٱلْيَتَٰمَىٰ وَٱلْمَسَٰكِينُ فَٱرْزُقُوهُم مِّنْهُ وَقُولُواْ لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا ۝٨ وَلْيَخْشَ ٱلَّذِينَ لَوْ تَرَكُواْ مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّةً ضِعَٰفًا خَافُواْ عَلَيْهِمْ فَلْيَتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَلْيَقُولُواْ قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ۝٩ إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَٰلَ ٱلْيَتَٰمَىٰ ظُلْمًا إِنَّمَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِى بُطُونِهِمْ نَارًا ۖ وَسَيَصْلَوْنَ سَعِيرًا﴾

"If other relatives or orphans or poor people attend the sharing-out, provide for them out of it and speak to them correctly and courteously. People should show concern in the same way that they would fear for small children if they were to die leaving them behind. They should have taqwā of Allah and say words that are appropriate. People who consume the property of orphans wrongfully consume nothing in their bellies except fire. They will roast in a Searing Blaze." [an-Nisā' 4:8-10]

You can see that the discussion is connected to orphans and their rights and the obligation to maintain them.

In these verses and those that precede them, there is a stern warning for plenipotentiaries over orphans' wealth, that they not squander anything or neglect any of their rights. There is also a general command for all people to look after these weak people, who have lost their guardians and providers.

Following the standard rule in Allah the Exalted's Book, as we alluded to above, this legal ruling, based on commands and prohibitions, must be followed by emotional stimulation that helps people accept it and become concerned with it willingly and lovingly.

So where is this emotional stimulation and how does it come about?

It comes in the contents of this verse: **". People should show concern in the same way that they would fear for small children if they were to die leaving them behind. They should have taqwā of Allah and say words that are appropriate."** [an-Nisā' 4:9]

As you can see, the beginning of the verse emphasises the aforementioned commands, but the Divine Elucidation connected this command to an emotional illustration that stimulated this command directly in the souls of those being addressed. It is an illustration of their state when they are about to leave this world, and if they have weak progeny, there will be no one left to look after them and take care of them.

The Divine Elucidation placed this moving image in the souls of those being addressed, such that when they become aware of it and they imagine themselves in that state, and they feel mercy and compassion in their hearts towards their children that they see around them, the Divine Elucidation issues its command to them, when they are deeply immersed in that state. This command is to look after the orphans under their care and to maintain their rights with the eye of general human mercy.

It would have been possible to say to them instead: 'Treat orphans the same way you would like your children to be treated after you.'

A statement like this, however, only addresses the intellect. It does not have any emotional effect on the soul, unless the listener's soul is ready, by its own nature, to submit to this human principle, and it already contains motives of mercy and compassion that can overcome the incentives of personal gain and the temptations of material goods and passions.

Here is the final example. Allah ﷻ says:

﴿يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱجْتَنِبُواْ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ ٱلظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ ٱلظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ ۖ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُواْ وَلَا يَغْتَب بَّعْضُكُم بَعْضًا ۚ أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ ۚ وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ﴾

"You who believe! Avoid most suspicion. Indeed some suspicion is a crime. And do not spy on and do not backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat his dead brother's flesh? No, you would hate it. And have taqwā of Allah. Allah is Ever-Returning, Most Merciful." [al-Ḥujurāt 49:12]

As you can see, Allah ﷻ is forbidding the believers from backbiting and warning them against it. Then this prohibition, which is aimed at the intellect, is supported by emotional incentives, and thus He draws for them a repulsive image that anyone involved in backbiting would be disgusted by: the image of a human being biting the flesh of another human being while it is a corpse and has no life in it! It places this image, face to face, in front of those who are being addressed with this prohibition, so that they can contemplate it and thoroughly feel it at the same time. Then it asks them – after affirming for them what they imagine and conceive of that this is the image of backbiting, or indeed its reality: would one of you like to sink his teeth into a dead human body, tear some flesh off of it, and then chew it and swallow it?

However much one may desire or feel motivated to engage in backbiting someone, placing this disgusting image directly in front of his imagination and his human feelings, without any intellectual investigation or research, prevents him from delving into it because it is so loathsome and repugnant.

It is clear that this is a matter of illustration and imagination, but it is a pedagogical style that is irreplaceable and inevitable if one wants the soul to follow the inspiration of the mind and intellect.

It is an example of "conditioned association", in which the thing being associated produces the same effect even though it is artificial and imaginary. Thus, whenever someone engaged in backbiting remembers this image that has been illustrated in Allah's ﷻ Book and stops there, he is free to turn away from what he was engaged in and cleanse his tongue from that filth that he was chewing on, and then he is able to regret it and seek forgiveness.

I have many examples in front of me of this method of emotional stimulation. It suffices you to know that all the verses of instilling desire and instilling fear[35] are based, first and foremost, on promises and threats that are supported by proofs and evidences, and then on drawing this image that we have explained and clarified examples of.

The first way is to convince the intellect and **the second way** is to influence the soul.

When the verses are directed in this second way, they stop directly in front of these imaginations and psychical feelings, without letting intellectual lingo or logical investigation get in the way of this crystal clear image that is being presented to the soul.

Read all the long verses in the Qur'ān that describe promises, threats, and the representation of the Resurrection and the Gathering, and you will see the meaning that we are affirming very clearly.

35 Ar. *at-targhīb wa at-tarhīb.*

Moreover, no injustice is done therein to the value of the intellect and thinking. Rather, there is coordination and distinction, both of which are indispensable, between the functions of both the mind and the emotions.

The need calls for both of them to pursue any action or behaviour that can rectify and reform, because one of them – the intellect – draws and plans, while the second – the emotions – push for implementation and execution. Neither of them does what the other does.

Therefore, in order for each of them to carry out its function, there has to be coordination and distinction between them such that neither is confused with the other.

This is because emotional stimulation only relies on a moving illustration that is placed before one's imagination and feelings. If it is mixed with the inspiration of the intellect, the illustration is ruined and its effect is lost.

Rational inspiration, or the scales of logic, can only be beneficial with regards to the subject matter, if it carries out its task before the emotional stimulation or afterwards. This is the way that the Qur'ān is known for, and it is the ideal way to promote pedagogical principles and values using both the scale of the intellect and the intensity of emotion.

Third, relying on a commensurate mixture of effective, emotional elements, and not letting one element take precedence over the others:

Let us explain this principle in a way that reveals how important it is and how accurate the Qur'ān is in using it. We say:

The sources of human emotions are three:

1. **Incentive emotions**, such as joy, hope, and desire
2. **Repellent emotions,** such as fear, awe, and pity
3. **Lauding emotions**, such as admiration, love, and veneration

If you contemplate the various emotions that a person feels in his daily life, you will find that they all go back to one of these three foundations, and they are the pillar for any educator when he wants to use emotional stimulation in his work.

The educator's relying on the emotional element is not because it is of great importance. Rather, its entire importance lies in the ability to form a commensurate, balanced, mixture of these three foundations, which are the sources of all emotions. This is because if he underestimates the effects of one of these foundations, or one of them has precedence over the others, it becomes a bad source and a cause of ruin, and no benefit from it will be obtained for the pedagogical goals.

An educator's use of nothing other than a stick of fear to push his student is a clear cause of his destruction. At the same time, using nothing but joy and desire to motivate him will also ruin him. Filling him with feelings of veneration and admiration without using any of the tools of instilling desire or instilling fear will not move him if he is still and will not straighten him if he is crooked.[36]

36 Some might object on the basis that there are people who worship Allah the Exalted because they are motivated by feelings of veneration, admiration, and love for Him, and they are the ones whom Rābi'ah al-'Adawiyah embodied by saying, 'O Allah, I have not worshipped

The method of education cannot be fit for purpose unless it is based on a proportionate mixture of all these three feelings. Pedagogical treatments only go wrong and fail to achieve their desired goals in general because they lack this proportionate mixture.

Allah the Exalted's Book attracts people's hearts with an emotional force (after rational deliberation and logical presentation) that comprises these three foundations in permanent proportionate and commensurate measure.

You will not find a verse therein that submits man to pure awe and fright, or makes him hope for glad tidings with no fear whatsoever. Rather, one of the comprehensive principles of Allah the Exalted's Book is that it does not remind man of Allah's attributes of authority and vengeance unless it also reminds him of His attributes of mercy and forgiveness. It does not tell him about any of the attributes of Paradise and its blessings unless it also tells him about the Fire and its punishments.

You out of fear of Your Fire or out of desire for Your Paradise. Instead, I have found that You are deserving of worship, so I have worshipped You.'

You should know that these people have surpassed the pedagogical method in their lives. Before reaching this rank, they travelled the long path of contemplation, effort, and worship and they were motivated by desire, fear, and veneration, such that when their souls had been liberated from base desires and cleansed of worldly attachments, and they had been branded with the mark of divine love, from that point onwards they were motivated by nothing but love.

If they had not adhered to a pedagogical method that was based on taking the soul and regulating it, and motivating it via this commensurate mixture of emotions, they would not have reached this lofty state of annihilation (*al-fana'*) in Allah the Exalted's Essence and submitted to His authority merely because He is a sublime lord and deserves to be worshipped.

Nevertheless, this state of theirs does not mean that they did not desire Paradise or did not fear punishment. Rather, it means that they were motivated to carry out the obligation of worship even if they were not to receive any reward for doing so and would not bear any sin for leaving it, regardless of how attached they were to His Paradise and His pleasure or how concerned they were about His Fire and punishment.

It is a state that is clearly illustrated in his ﷺ words: {Should I not be a grateful slave?}

Wherever you look in Allah the Exalted's Book, you will not find any deviation from this principle. You will not find a passage containing one of these two illustrations unless the opposite illustration is next to it. Look at His ﷻ words:

﴿نَبِّئْ عِبَادِيٓ أَنِّيٓ أَنَا ٱلْغَفُورُ ٱلرَّحِيمُ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَأَنَّ عَذَابِي هُوَ ٱلْعَذَابُ ٱلْأَلِيمُ﴾

"Tell My slaves that I am the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful, but also that My punishment is the painful punishment." [al-Ḥijr 15:49-50]

﴿قُلْ يَٰعِبَادِيَ ٱلَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا۟ عَلَىٰٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا۟ مِن رَّحْمَةِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ ٱلذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا ۚ إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ ٱلْغَفُورُ ٱلرَّحِيمُ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَأَنِيبُوٓا۟ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلِمُوا۟ لَهُۥ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ ٱلْعَذَابُ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ﴾

"Say: 'My slaves who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of Allah's mercy. Truly Allah forgives all wrong actions. He is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.' Turn in repentance to your Lord and submit to Him before punishment comes upon you, for then you cannot be helped." [az-Zumar 39:53-54]

﴿إِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ كَانَتْ مِرْصَادًا ﴿٢١﴾ لِّلطَّٰغِينَ مَـَٔابًا ﴿٢٢﴾ لَّٰبِثِينَ فِيهَآ أَحْقَابًا ﴿٢٣﴾ لَّا يَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا بَرْدًا وَلَا شَرَابًا ﴿٢٤﴾ إِلَّا حَمِيمًا وَغَسَّاقًا ﴿٢٥﴾ جَزَآءً وِفَاقًا ﴿٢٦﴾ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا۟ لَا يَرْجُونَ حِسَابًا ﴿٢٧﴾ وَكَذَّبُوا۟ بِـَٔايَٰتِنَا كِذَّابًا ﴿٢٨﴾ وَكُلَّ شَىْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَٰهُ كِتَٰبًا ﴿٢٩﴾ فَذُوقُوا۟ فَلَن نَّزِيدَكُمْ إِلَّا عَذَابًا ﴿٣٠﴾ إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ مَفَازًا ﴿٣١﴾ حَدَآئِقَ وَأَعْنَٰبًا ﴿٣٢﴾ وَكَوَاعِبَ أَتْرَابًا

﴿۳۲ وَكَأْسًا دِهَاقًا ۳۳ لَّا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا وَلَا كِذَّابًا ۳۵ جَزَآءً مِّن رَّبِّكَ عَطَآءً
حِسَابًا ۳۶ رَّبِّ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِنْهُ خِطَابًا﴾

"The Fire lies in wait – a homecoming for the profligate, remaining in it for countless aeons, not tasting any coolness therein or any drink, except for boiling water and scalding pus – a fitting recompense. They did not expect to have a reckoning and utterly denied Our Signs. We have recorded all things in writing. So taste! We only increase you in punishment. For those who have taqwā there is triumph: gardens and grapevines, and nubile maidens of similar age, and an overflowing cup, where they will hear no prattle and no denial, a recompense from your Lord, a commensurate gift. Lord of the skies and the earth and everything between them, the All-Merciful. They will not have the power to speak to Him." [an-Naba' 78:21-37]

The benefit of adhering to this principle is that man remains between desire and fear without one of them prevailing over the other. His hope in Allah's ﷻ mercy does not become so firm that he neglects his obligations and responsibilities, nor does he become so overwhelmed with fear that despair takes him away from his obligations, because he is certain that there is no point in performing them and that Allah ﷻ will not accept them.

Whatever path an educator puts a student or child on, whoever that student or child may be, it will not be sound unless it is based on both of these pillars: desire and fear.

A prominent example of this approach's being realised is that every time the Qur'ān describes the people of Paradise, it describes their loftiest and greatest deeds, and every time it describes the people of the Fire, it describes their most wicked deeds and those that provoked Allah's ﷻ wrath the most.

The wisdom behind this is that when you contemplate the attributes of the believers and compare them with your own state, you will see that you are beneath that level, for they are described, as we have said, with the greatest of attributes and the loftiest of righteous deeds. You will thus have little hope in being one of them.

If you contemplate the attributes of the people of the Fire and compare their attributes to your own state, you will see yourself above them, for they are described, as we have said, by their most wicked deeds. You will thus have hope that you will not be one of them and that you will remain, in your own estimation, somewhere in the middle between these people and those people. Both your desire and your fear will intensify, and thus you will strive to be better than the unbelievers and you will strive to be more like the believers.

Look, for example, at what He ﷻ says when describing the believers who deserve Allah the Exalted's Pleasure and His Paradise:

﴿وَٱلَّذِينَ يَبِيتُونَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَقِيَـٰمًا ﴿٦٤﴾ وَٱلَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا ٱصْرِفْ عَنَّا عَذَابَ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ إِنَّ عَذَابَهَا كَانَ غَرَامًا ﴿٦٥﴾ إِنَّهَا سَآءَتْ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَمُقَامًا ﴿٦٦﴾ وَٱلَّذِينَ إِذَآ أَنفَقُوا۟ لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا۟ وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا۟ وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَٰلِكَ قَوَامًا ﴿٦٧﴾ وَٱلَّذِينَ لَا يَدْعُونَ مَعَ ٱللَّهِ إِلَـٰهًا ءَاخَرَ وَلَا يَقْتُلُونَ ٱلنَّفْسَ ٱلَّتِى حَرَّمَ ٱللَّهُ إِلَّا بِٱلْحَقِّ وَلَا يَزْنُونَ ۚ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَٰلِكَ يَلْقَ أَثَامًا﴾

"those who pass the night prostrating and standing before their Lord; those who say, 'Our Lord, avert from us the punishment of the Fire. Its punishment is inescapable pain. It is indeed an evil lodging and abode'; those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor mean, but take a stance midway between the two; those who do not call on any other god together with Allah

and do not kill anyone Allah has made inviolate, except with the right to do so, and do not fornicate; anyone who does so will receive an evil punishment." [al-Furqān 25:64-68]

You can also look at another of His ﷻ descriptions of them:

﴿إِنَّ ٱلْمُتَّقِينَ فِى جَنَّٰتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿١٥﴾ ءَاخِذِينَ مَآ ءَاتَىٰهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا۟ قَبْلَ ذَٰلِكَ مُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٦﴾ كَانُوا۟ قَلِيلًا مِّنَ ٱلَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَبِٱلْأَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَفِىٓ أَمْوَٰلِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِّلسَّآئِلِ وَٱلْمَحْرُومِ﴾

"The people of taqwā will be among gardens and fountains, receiving what their Lord has given them. Certainly, before that they were good-doers. The part of the night they spent asleep was small and they would seek forgiveness before the dawn. And beggars and the destitute received a due share of their wealth." [adh-Dhāriyāt 51:15-19]

When you contemplate the attributes of those who deserve the victory of Allah's Paradise and His pleasure, as described in these verses, you almost never see them implemented unless it is by the truly devout and sincere,[37] for they are the ones who spend the night standing and prostrating, who seek Allah's forgiveness before dawn, who walk lightly on the earth, and do not listen to the insults of the ignorant or the disputes of the malevolent.[38]

After that, however, your attention is turned to Allah's description of the opposite, the attributes of the people of the Fire on the Day of Standing. After mentioning the Companions of the Right and that they are in gardens of delight, He says:

37 Ar. *ar-rabbāniyūn* and *as-ṣiddiqūn*.
38 (tn): Please see Sūrat al-Furqān 25:63.

﴿مَا سَلَكَكُمْ فِي سَقَرَ ﴿٤٢﴾ قَالُوا لَمْ نَكُ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّينَ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَلَمْ نَكُ نُطْعِمُ الْمِسْكِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَكُنَّا نَخُوضُ مَعَ الْخَائِضِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَكُنَّا نُكَذِّبُ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴿٤٦﴾ حَتَّىٰ أَتَانَا الْيَقِينُ﴾

"'What caused you to enter Saqar?'[39] They will say, 'We were not among those who prayed and we did not feed the poor. We plunged with those who plunged and denied the Day of Repayment until that which is certain[40] came to us.'"
[al-Mudaththir 74:42-47]

He ﷻ also describes them by saying:

﴿وَأَصْحَابُ الشِّمَالِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الشِّمَالِ ﴿٤١﴾ فِي سَمُومٍ وَحَمِيمٍ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَظِلٍّ مِّن يَحْمُومٍ ﴿٤٣﴾ لَّا بَارِدٍ وَلَا كَرِيمٍ ﴿٤٤﴾ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَبْلَ ذَٰلِكَ مُتْرَفِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَكَانُوا يُصِرُّونَ عَلَى الْحِنثِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَكَانُوا يَقُولُونَ أَئِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَإِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾ أَوَآبَاؤُنَا الْأَوَّلُونَ﴾

"And the Companions of the Left: what of the Companions of the Left? Amid searing blasts and scalding water, and the murk of thick black smoke, providing no coolness and no pleasure. Before that they were living in luxury, persisting in immense wrongdoing and saying, 'When we are dead and turned to dust and bones, shall we then be raised again or our forefathers, the earlier peoples?'" [al-Wāqi'ah 56:41-48]

When you contemplate these attributes, you find that they only apply to those who are on the furthest extreme of rejection and disbelief in Allah ﷻ.

39 (tn): i.e. the Fire.
40 (tn): i.e. death.

Then, when you compare yourself to those who bear these attributes, you have no doubt that you are in a better state than they are, and you have great hope that you will not end up as one of them, and that you will not receive any of their punishment.

However, you go back to the entirety of what the Qur'ān has described, the state of both the victorious and the damned on the Day of Standing, and you find that you do not belong to either side. You thus remain in a middlemost state, between certainty in Allah's mercy and forgiveness and certainty in Allah's castigation and punishment. You are driven towards both by fear and hope, awe and desire...this is the state that will make you strive quickly to be more like these righteous people and less like those damned people.

This is how Allah the Exalted's Elucidation and its pedagogical approach places you between fear of His punishment and hope for His reward, such that you do not fear His punishment so much that you fall into despair, nor do you desire His mercy so much that it makes you indifferent.

In His Unequivocal Elucidation, Allah the Exalted has taught us to be upon this state of fear and hope. Thus, we do not worship Allah on an edge of either of them, and we do not only take on the attributes of His that indicate severity, or only those that indicate ease.

He described His righteous slaves as such when He said:

﴿وَيَدْعُونَنَا رَغَبًا وَرَهَبًا ۖ وَكَانُوا لَنَا خَاشِعِينَ﴾

"...calling out to us in earning and in awe, and humbling themselves to us." [al-Anbiyā' 21:90]

He the Exalted warns against being carried away and feeling safe from Allah's punishment:

﴿أَفَأَمِنُوا۟ مَكْرَ ٱللَّهِ ۚ فَلَا يَأْمَنُ مَكْرَ ٱللَّهِ إِلَّا ٱلْقَوْمُ ٱلْخَـٰسِرُونَ﴾

"Do they feel secure against Allah's devising? No one feels secure against Allah's devising except for those who are lost." [al-'A'rāf 7:99]

Likewise, He warns against being carried away by the despair of His mercy:

﴿إِنَّهُۥ لَا يَا۟يْـَٔسُ مِن رَّوْحِ ٱللَّهِ إِلَّا ٱلْقَوْمُ ٱلْكَـٰفِرُونَ﴾

"No one despairs of solace from Allah except for those who are unbelievers." [Yūsuf 12:87]

The most wonderful example that I have found that discloses this part of the sublime pedagogical approach in Allah the Exalted's Book is the advice that Abū Bakr as-Ṣiddīq ﷺ gave to 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ when he was on his deathbed:

'Do you not see, 'Umar, that those whose scales are heavy on the Day of Standing are heavy because they followed the truth and it weighed upon them, and it is a right of a scale that no truth is placed upon it except that it is heavy?

'Do you not see, 'Umar, that those whose scales are light on the Day of Standing are light because they followed falsehood and it was light for them, and it is a right of a scale that no falsehood is placed upon it except that it is light?

'Do you not see, 'Umar, that a verse of ease is only sent down with a verse of severity, and a verse of severity is only sent down with a verse

of ease, so that a believer has both yearning and awe? He does not yearn in such a way that he hopes from Allah that which is not for him, nor does he have such awe that he just gives up.[41]

'Do you not see, 'Umar, that Allah only mentions the people of the Fire along with the most wicked of their deeds, and thus when I remember them I say: "I hope I am not one of them", and that Allah only mentions the people of Paradise along with the best of their deeds, and thus when I remember them I say: "Where are my deeds in comparison to theirs?"?

'If you heed my advice, nothing absent will be more beloved to you than death, and it is coming to you. If you neglect my advice, nothing absent will be more hated by you than death, and you cannot stop Allah.'

These are the three matters upon which the Divine Elucidation bases its method of emotional stimulation. We have only discussed it briefly, to the extent that the size and objective of this treatise allow. Maybe Allah has destined for this important research that someone will come back to it with more analysis, study, and commentary.

41 (tn): i.e. one should not persist in committing sins and say that he will be resurrected with the Prophets and the martyrs, nor should one despair of Allah's forgiveness and therefore persist in committing acts of disobedience.

TO CONCLUDE

To conclude, perhaps you have contemplated what I have said about Allah the Exalted's Book, up to this moment, from the pedagogical angle that I was talking to you about.

Perhaps your contemplation will arrive at the same conclusion that many researchers and investigators have arrived at, which is that it is a sublime Book in its essence, inimitable in its rhetoric, wise in its principles, and brilliant in its pedagogy! Then, this is as far as the investigation leads them; they finish the matter right after starting it, and thus it has no effect – afterwards – on their theology, their conduct, or their character.

If it is amazing that some people turn away from looking into this Book, this way of contemplating it and being amazed by it is weirder and even more amazing.

It is an inimitable Book. There is no doubt about its inimitability. There is no doubt about the wisdom of its subject matter and the brilliance of its pedagogy!

We have absolute certainty in all of this. Then, looking at the verses in which it warns and threatens does not give us a sense of urgency to find out how we should be with this Book, what our relationship should be like with its commands and prohibitions, its warnings and its guidance. Is that not truly amazing?

We bow our heads as we reflect on it, as we think about its brilliant style and its splendid rulings, and then we do not listen when it describes itself:

﴿وَإِنَّهُۥ لَتَنزِيلُ رَبِّ ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ ﴿١٩٢﴾ نَزَلَ بِهِ ٱلرُّوحُ ٱلْأَمِينُ ﴿١٩٣﴾ عَلَىٰ قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ ٱلْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُّبِينٍ ﴿١٩٥﴾ وَإِنَّهُۥ لَفِى زُبُرِ ٱلْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٩٦﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُمْ ءَايَةً أَن يَعْلَمَهُۥ عُلَمَٰٓؤُا۟ بَنِىٓ إِسْرَٰٓءِيلَ﴾

"Truly it is revelation sent down by the Lord of all creation. The Faithful Spirit brought it down to your heart so that you might be one of the Warners, in a clear Arabic tongue. It is certainly in the scriptures of previous peoples. Is it not indeed a sign for them that the scholars of the tribe of Isrā'īl have knowledge of it?" [ash-Shu'arā' 26:192-197]

Is it not even more amazing that people who have this incompatible duplexity, which is attached to one reality that cannot be multiplied or divided, are described as intelligent?

Maybe some of them will be content to claim that it is the speech of our master Muḥammad ﷺ, such that by doing so they flee from faith in the miracle of divine revelation. However, they only fall into the necessity of believing in a miracle that is greater and more immense!

To believe firmly that the Qur'ān is the speech of Muḥammad ﷺ and is not revelation that was sent down to him is to believe that

he ﷺ spent forty years of his life making sure he never lied to people. Then, all of a sudden, he started lying and it was the greatest lie against Allah!

It is to believe that he ﷺ (and he was unlettered; in his entire life, he never wrote a letter or read anything written) somehow managed to acquire – without prior knowledge or a teacher – knowledge of systematic laws, news of previous nations, and information about future events. It is to believe that he was given a duplexity in the ability to speak, such that at certain times he would speak eloquently but other people were able to imitate it, and at other times he would speak in a different way – which was neither poetry nor prose – that would dazzle intellects with its amazing formulation, its brilliant rhetoric, and its amazing meanings. People devoted themselves to trying to imitate it and their efforts came to absolutely nothing!

It is to believe that he ﷺ was given unprecedented ability to change his physical appearance and to act, an ability that has not yet been achieved by even the most skilled actors and professionals, for he was able to make his face appear yellow, make his body tremble, and make his limbs have a feverish chill to make people think that he was receiving revelation. To this day, we have not heard of an actor who can stand on a stage, conceal the redness of the blood that flows through his face, and instead make it a bright yellow, unless he is using powder or makeup.

It is certainly easier – and a thousand times so – for the human intellect to believe firmly that this Qur'ān – and is stated by the one who conveyed and is found in the text itself – is revelation from Allah to His Messenger than it is to bear the burdens of these extraordinary, rejected believers that have no validity or proof whatsoever.

Maybe some of them affirm that it is Allah's ﷻ Speech, but after that, they do not push themselves to take on the responsibility of investigating and researching anything of this speech. This, too, is no less amazing than the state of those mentioned above.

The state of these people is like that of a man who seeks refuge at night in a cave deep inside a mountain. When he feels his way around the cave and what it contains, his hands fall upon some leftover pieces of flesh and bones in one of its corners. He then becomes certain that it is the lair of some predatory animal. Then he stretches himself out and closes his eyes in order to sleep, without that certainty leading him to any sort of caution or planning.

You are certain that this speech is Allah's Speech, but then its commands, its rulings, its threats, and its warnings do not trouble you at all!

You look at Allah's ﷻ words:

﴿ٱقْتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمْ وَهُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مُّعْرِضُونَ﴾

"Mankind's reckoning has drawn very close to them, yet they heedlessly turn away." [al-Anbiyā' 21:1] and these words do not inspire you to embark upon any deed, contemplation, or planning!

Maybe it is bigotry that takes you away from the truth that you can see with your own eyes and that you can perceive with your own feelings and intellect.

Know that bigotry is madness itself when it is against an inescapable fact, or against a path that one has no choice but to go down.

I have spoken to you about this pedagogical approach in the Qur'ān, but by Allah, in the end, I intended nothing but to turn your attention to the reality of this Book, which came to man bearing the most important news!

It will not benefit you in the slightest to derive pedagogical principles from it, or rhetorical foundations, or legal rulings, if you do not look at the reality for which it was sent down, an immensely important reality. However, it is hidden behind fine curtains made of egoistic ambitions and earthly desires.

By Allah, that curtain is on the verge of being torn down, after which this entire reality will be crystal clear, but at that point, it will be of no benefit to you, because life will no longer be in your hands.

You will remember what I am telling you. I consign my destiny completely to Allah. Truly Allah sees His slaves.[42] Praise be to Allah, Lord of all Creation.

42 (tn): Please see Sūrat al-Ghāfir 40:44.